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Real religion

REAL RELIGION

GIPSY SMITH

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*Revival Sermons Delivered
During His Twentieth Visit to America*

BY
Rodney
GIPSY SMITH

AUTHOR OF "EVANGELISTIC TALKS," "THE LOST CHRIST,"
"YOUR BOYS," ETC.

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REAL RELIGION. II

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I

THE AGONY AND JOY OF
SALVATION

REAL RELIGION

I

THE AGONY AND JOY OF SALVATION

TEXT: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door."

*St. Luke. Chapter 13, Verse 24
and part of Verse 25.*

Let me read this text as I think it should be read, "Strive (or agonise) to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door."

It has been hinted to me that in my preaching I am making things rather difficult. If you will read the New Testament you will discover that Jesus never made salvation easy. Any one who thinks that it is an easy thing to be a Christian does not know Jesus, neither does he know the New Testament. I am certain that if any one thinks it is easy to live the Christ-like life, he or she has never tried to live it in all its fulness and beauty. I want to emphasise this, because I do not want any candidate for discipleship to be under an illusion concerning what it means to be

a Christian. I want to make discipleship as plain as the New Testament makes it, as difficult as the New Testament makes it, as easy as the New Testament makes it. I may, perhaps, sweep away many of your preconceived ideas on the subject, but I am prepared for that. You may not relish all I have to say but I never knew any one yet who thoroughly enjoyed a surgical operation. Do you expect that I am looking to you to enjoy my ministry if you are not right with God? I want to present my message to you that you will not feel at peace under my preaching until you do get right with Him.

There are thousands upon thousands of people who are called Christians and who yet have no right to the title. Many of these are Church-members, without knowing why they are. But the child of God knows why he seeks fellowship with the Church, and with God's people. The man who is born again can give an answer to the question as to why he is a Church-member. A person coming under the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit can give an answer. They know!

Some time ago a young lady wrote to me and said, "I have just graduated. I am leaving college! My minister wants me to join the Church. He says I ought to. My parents also seek to persuade me, and they are giving me no rest. But, Gipsy Smith, I once heard you speak, and say that the first thing necessary to discipleship is a change of heart. What ought I to do? Ought I to join the Church in response to my parents' wishes, and my pastor's request? What do you say?" I replied, "The New Testament says you

must be born again. It does not say 'join the Church.'” Church-membership is all right in its proper place. It is the natural outcome of a change of heart, of a new-born spirit. It is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. But if you put Church-membership in the place of discipleship you are mocking God, and deceiving your own soul. Any one, pastor or parents, who induces you to join the Church without first making enquiry concerning your new birth is leading you along a crooked path which leads nowhere. No true teacher, with an open Bible in his hand, could do such a thing. I hear people crying “Peace! Peace!” where there is no peace, and where there never will be peace until the occasion for war has passed away.

It is a big thing to be a Christian—a real Christian. It would be easy for me to take your name and write it down on a piece of paper and place the paper in a musty cupboard belonging to an ecclesiastical building and call it a Church Roll. I could write your name there. I could sprinkle you in baptism. I could immerse you. I could put my hands upon you and confirm you. I could do all that—but it takes the Holy Ghost to make you a Child of God. That is a vital experience in the pathway of discipleship.

The New Birth is not after the will of man, or the will of flesh. It is a work done in you by the Holy Ghost. No organisation can do it. No creed can accomplish it. It is done for you from the throne of the Omnipotent God. Listen! You will never experience it without a struggle—you will never obtain it without an effort—and effort of your own. Your

minister may want it done for you. Your father and mother may pray that it may come upon you; your husband or your wife may also pray. Somebody else who loves you may want this thing to be done, but only you and God can do it. Nothing can be done until you and God come together. If ever you get through the gates of pearl, if ever you see the King in His beauty, if ever you witness the glory of those ministering angels who wait upon God, if ever you walk the golden streets and breathe the air of an endless Paradise, it will be because you have sufficient volition, intelligence, will and determination to settle this matter with God and with yourself.

This leads me to the next thing. The Bible does not say do this, and do that and you will be a Christian. It says, "Ye must be born again!" "But," you object, "is not Love's atoning work done?" "Yes! '*Love's*' atoning work—but not yours. God has never done your work—and never will. You are a free agent. He appeals to you for action and expects a response. The whole matter rests with you. I say this reverently—that God can do no more for you than He has done, not until you respond to this great appeal. I want you to think over this statement, for unless you do think over it, I can lead you nowhere. I want your conscience and your intelligence to work together upon this subject, for the more deeply you consider it the more certain will your experience become. People who are superficial in spiritual things—who live on the surface of great spiritual events—can never be satisfied. The people who gain most are those who dive down into the depths, who probe into the

heart of things. Jesus never made it easy for any one to be saved. There was a man, you remember, who came to Jesus and found Him in the midst of a great work, healing all sorts of people, and blessing them. Yet this man had the will-power to get to Jesus.

Here, for example, is an inquisitive man. There has not been a preacher in his locality for twenty years whom he has not heard. He goes from one church to another. All the religion he has is in the heels of his boots. He is a speculative sort of person, and says, "There are lots of men moving around Christ and apparently moving toward Christ, but how many will get really converted? How many will remain true in six months' time?" We preachers, all of us, know this man, and have heard him speak time and again. I have had people come to me some time after a great revival and say, "Where are your converts now?" I say, in reply, "They are where you drove them." Are there few that will be saved? Listen to the answer: Jesus says, Save yourselves! Never mind the other fellows who strive to enter the strait gate, for they will seek to enter and will not be able when once the master of the house has shut the door. What does that mean? Get in while the bell rings! Don't rush up ten seconds after the train has left the platform and look so earnest and wistful as if its departure had broken your heart. Don't find fault with the railway company for starting the train on time. Get in while the train is there—waiting! There is a time limit. Strive to get in! Strive to the point of blood and death if necessary to enter the strait gate. Lose everything else in the world if it hinders you from

achieving your object. Strive to do this! It will not be easy. It is a life and death struggle! Strive!

There was another man who came to Jesus. He came to headquarters and he said to the Commander-in-Chief, to the high authority, "What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Jesus said, "Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor . . . and come, take up the cross and follow Me." It was too difficult. He did not do it. He went away sorrowful. But Jesus did not lower the standard, not even for the young ruler, whom He loved. He did not compromise.

Take note of another man, one of the inner circle, one of the professed princes of the Church of his day, an office-bearer in the Church, but one who was not born again. This was a man who could boast of the mantle of religious knowledge, the phylactery of the Pharisee. He said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Jesus said to this man, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus would not make discipleship easy, even for a master in Israel.

There was another man who said, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." Jesus knew this man had counted the cost of discipleship, and said, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." It will not be easy, said Jesus, in effect, to follow Me! "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off." "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into

everlasting fire." It is your Master who speaks. Hear him. He never makes discipleship an easy thing. It is we who have cheapened religion; we who have vulgarised it. To our shame, we have compromised with the spirit of this world, and the angels shudder to the tips of their wings. May God forgive us!

I said to that dear girl who asked for advice. "Do not join any Church until you get right with God." That is my message to all men and women who seek Christian fellowship. What is the use of Church-membership without the new birth? Why take Holy Communion? What is the use of being an office-bearer if you are not in harmony with the God whom you profess to serve? It is sheer blasphemy to do these things. To many people, joining the Church means little more than joining a club, or becoming a member of the Boy Scouts. I am not certain it always means as much as that. Nothing but a new heart and a surrendered life will satisfy the conscience and the intellect in the light of the resurrection morning, and nothing less will bring peace and deliverance. You will not reach your goal without an effort. You must "strive" to enter into your heritage! You may have to tell the people you live with that you are going to be a Christian, no matter what it costs. That you do not care what people think of you—that you are going to give your soul a chance, and God a chance. You will have to be a good Christian. You may have to put your fingers in your ears and set your face toward the Cross and run. Discipleship will not come cheaply. Our pianist did not acquire that magnificent touch on the piano without much practice—without a "regular

grind." He did not pick it up at a street corner, or whilst dancing to jazz music. He did not develop the finer sensibilities of a musician by listening to the beating of a drum or a tin kettle. You must have the soul of a musician to develop a touch so delicate that the angels will fly toward you enchanted. Men and women do not advance along the highway of spiritual progress without a struggle. Men do not master anything at all without effort, and discipleship is the biggest study of all, the most difficult study, the study that takes most out of the human soul, and brings about a result approved of God, and of which the workman need not be ashamed. Most boys and girls to-day go to school. I was a Gipsy boy who was never at school, and at the age of 16 I could not read. How do you suppose I mastered the English language? How do you suppose I got a grip of it? I sat down at nights with a candle in a bottle for a candlestick, and I pored over a Bible and a dictionary, the two books together, until the light of day broke, but with the morning I had triumphed. I knew God. I knew His Will. This knowledge cost me hours of sleep, night after night. Often, I preached all day and studied all night. Blessed be God, the struggle did me good. You must not think that you are going to get to heaven on a bed of roses. You won't get there *that* way.

The truth is, we do not take sufficient time to cultivate the religious life. We are too much in a crowd. We are afraid to be alone. We are afraid of God, and afraid of ourselves. We can get so afraid of God, and of the things of God, that we will not take time to face

them. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned and spiritually understood. You cannot really understand the stars until you know something of astronomy. You cannot understand the beauty and glory of the flowers until you know something of botany. A rose is botanically understood. Stars are astronomically understood. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Spiritual things are spiritually understood. Discipleship is a fight—a struggle—a conflict. It is warfare. It is a warfare against the spirit of this world, which misunderstands, abuses, jeers at those who would follow Jesus! It means taking your stand against unknown powers—it means having the manhood and the hardness in all circumstances to say "Christ for me." This is the kind of discipleship the New Testament teaches. There is nothing sensational about it, nothing vulgar about it. Without effort you will never be a Christian. Religion—discipleship—is not something cheap, nor small. The most noble thing this side Heaven is a man or woman with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. God could not call you to anything higher than to be His child. "Strive," therefore, to be worthy of your high calling.

The door is open—the strait gate of discipleship—strive to enter, while you may. You *can* go in! There is a way to it here and now and no devil in hell, no power on earth, can keep you from going in if you really want to. The door is open and the path plain. Have you grace, and courage, and strength, sufficient to walk in? You can get in on one condition—that you are willing to leave your sins outside.

Everything in your life that is ugly, mean, and contemptible must be left outside. You must leave the world outside. You must get rid of all that Jesus cannot approve of, and no one knows but you what this is. He will tell you if you really want to know. He will not leave you in doubt as to what it is. You must get near to Him and the nearer you get the more you will know His mind and will.

I do not care who you are—what your moral and spiritual condition may be—what entanglements you are in—what your past life has been. You can get in through the straight gate of pardon and life and reconciliation and peace and triumph and heaven to-day if you have got sufficient courage—sufficient manhood and womanhood to say “I will.”

I got my first ideas of God—not from books—for I could not read them—but from the lips of my father, and it was like the unfolding of a rose in the early June morning. I had no mother to love me—she was gone. As a little boy I remember how I used to go and sit down in the hedge and yearn and cry for Mother, but when it dawned upon me that Jesus loved me, the old, cold, lonely world became a new world to me. I well remember the first prayer I ever uttered. It was just this. “Blessed Jesus, make my heart Thy home!” And—do you know—He just did it. How—and why—I cannot explain, any more than I can explain the fragrance of that rose. He does not ask me to explain it. He just came in and the wonder is that He stays there. He does! If you will pray that prayer and mean it—as I meant it—if you will sur-

render, as I surrendered, He will make your heart His home. But you will not get there without a struggle. You will have to fight your way home. God help you to do it, for it is so essentially "worth while." Strive, therefore, to enter in.



II

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

II

THE FAITH THAT SAVES

TEXT: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Epistle to Romans. Chapter 10, Verse 10.

I wish to speak to you about faith—saving faith; because there is a faith which does not save and that is more popular.

We preachers have not to deal to-day with blatant infidelity. If you had been with me in France in the oceans of blood, in the midst of bursting bombs and shells, in the hell of gas attacks, you would not have found such infidelity. It did not exist over there. In my movements among men, whether in America or in my own country, in Australia, South Africa, or any other part of the civilised world, I have found that the days of pronounced scepticism and unbelief have, to a great extent, passed away. Indifference? Yes, any amount of it—but not infidelity. Unbelief in religion and in religious things as they exist, but not in God, nor in Jesus Christ. Not in the real thing! Unbelief in the poor caricature which so many professed Christians present in their lives, but not in the real, genuine Christ-likeness which marks the disciple of our Master and Lord.

I say, infidelity is comparatively rare. There is belief in the world—but what sort of belief? Belief in

whom—in what? Is it genuine, Pentecostal, regenerating faith, or is it false, anæmic, spurious? I want you to decide here and now the kind of faith you will possess; because the nature of your belief makes all the difference in your relationship to God and to eternity. Listen to what Jesus says about that matter—Jesus, who is Truth. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth in him.” The responsibility of believing is placed upon us—upon you and upon me. If that is true, you and I had better find out what kind of belief we hold; what kind we have got. If salvation depends upon individual, personal belief, upon intelligent belief about Jesus Christ, it is high time for us to find out where and how we stand in this matter, and what we do believe.

I say again there is a saving faith, and there is such a thing as a damning faith. Which have you got? Shew me thy faith; shew me thy works. Faith without works is dead. When a thing is dead we bury it, lest corruption should set in. Faith without works is dead. You say you have faith, then shew me your works. “By their fruits—by their works—ye shall know them.” I am going to show you whether your faith is true or false, whether it is Bible faith or not. Living, vital, saving faith always produces a particular kind of fruit. It has never failed in this respect. Herein lies the acid test of your faith and mine.

If I came to you and said, “Are you a believer?” you would doubtless reply, “Of course I am a believer. What do you think I am—a heathen?” But when you declare that you are a believer, and show

that your life is anything but fruitful of the works of a believer, don't you see that you are condemning yourself out of your own lips? Don't you see that it would be better for you not to believe at all than to say you are a believer in Christ and continue to live the kind of life you do live, and of which Christ would surely disapprove. Don't you see that it would have been better for you to have been born in a heathen land than to have been born here, and then to live like a Hottentot or a pygmy in darkest Africa. Don't you see how wrong it is to profess to believe in God and yet treat Him as if He had no existence; no concern whatever with your comings and goings, your doings and misdoings; your life to-day and your life for eternity? Don't you see how inconsistent you are?

I said to a man the other day, "Are you a saved man?" "Saved," said he, "what do you mean?" I said, "Are you a Christian?" He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Have you a soul?" He replied, "Of course, I have a soul!" Then I said, "Is your soul saved?" He said again, "I don't know that it is!" Then I said, "Don't you see how contrary and inconsistent you are? You have a soul, you say, and yet you do not take the trouble to know if your soul is right with God." The world is full of just that sort of believer. Men and women say, "I believe in God; I believe in Jesus; I believe in the Bible!" What does all this amount to? That is all the faith they possess when they go to Church on Sunday; intellectual faith. They believe in Jesus as they believe in William the Conqueror; in Henry the Eighth; or in Abraham Lincoln—perhaps not so much. Some of these people would

applaud Abraham Lincoln—but not Jesus Christ. A merely intellectual faith will never save anybody. That is spurious, ineffective, worse than useless. A merely intellectual conviction about things in general will not save you. A faith that does not convict you of sin and lead you to repentance and transform your life is not the faith of the New Testament. A faith that does not change your heart, and your appetites and desires, is not a saving faith. The world is full of intellectual belief which produces no fruit; whose works are dead. There is not a drunkard in your city who does not believe that it is best to be sober. If you ask such a one if he believes in sobriety he will reply, "Of course I do," but he will get drunk if he can get whisky. That is not the faith which saves. That is merely intellectual faith. Go to the people in jail and find out what they are there for and earnestly enquire of them if they think it is best to be honest and upright and law-abiding, and you know what the answer will be. Of course, they believe it is best to be honest, but theirs is not an honest faith, or they would not be there.

You say, "I believe in God: I believe in Jesus: I believe in judgment: and I know I have to die!" But that kind of faith does not alter your life—and that is the kind of faith that is damning. It is paralysing faith, deceiving faith, ineffective faith. It is faith as an ally of Hell. The devil does not mind how much or how little you believe so long as you do not stop doing his will and his works, stop lying, stop stealing, stop cheating, stop swearing, and stop being unkind and unlovely and bad-tempered and impure.

The devil does not mind what you believe so long as you go on in the old settled, wicked way. Faith, living faith, means something more than an intellectual assent to things. It does not matter how much you know of the earth—it is what you do whilst you are in it that counts. You can have your mind full of Biblical truths and your heart abiding in unrighteousness. You can have your head full of light and your soul covered with darkness, for light is not life. You may go on singing “I believe” until doomsday, but you will never know Jesus without a faith that is genuine, and real—the faith that saves.

I was preaching one night in a great western city. At the close of the service, a dear old minister came into the ante-room, where I sat alone. He had had his day, this white-haired, saintly brother, and was waiting for his Lord. He came into the room and walked straight up to me and put his hand upon my head. I thought he was going to bless me, and stood for a moment with closed eyes, waiting for the prophet’s blessing. I thought he was going to bless me, or to pray for me, but instead he began to feel my head. Then I became curious, and said, “Are you a phrenologist, or what is the trouble?” He replied, “I am trying to find out the secret of your success.” I said, “You are feeling too high. Come down here (indicating the position of my heart). It is not in the head. It is in the heart that the secret lies!” Men and women, it is not what your head assents to but what your heart does that settles your salvation. You may have been baptised and yet be a sinner. You may know all the creeds, and yet nothing by experience of the saving Grace of

God. You may have godly traditions as your heritage and yet be a sinner away from God. You may have been confirmed at the altar by a Father in God and yet be a stranger in the family of the ransomed and redeemed. "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in nowise enter the Kingdom of God."

I do not want you to make any mistake about the kind of faith of which I am speaking. It is a faith that reaches down to the very roots of your secret being and purifies the hidden springs of your existence. It goes into the old and musty places of your past, and cleanses everything there, for God regardeth that which is past. It leaves nothing hidden, nothing covered up, or undealt with. The faith I am talking about is so real and active and triumphant; so blessed and so beautiful; that it puts the soul right with God. There is no peace without such a faith. You cannot have peace with a haunting past. Everything that speaks to you of guilt and condemnation must be taken away. The kind of faith I am talking about goes to the roots of things and deals with the wrong there and puts that right. The devil believes this more than some so called Christian people do. The devil believes it and trembles. He has more faith than some Church members possess. The devil does not doubt the divinity of Jesus Christ. The devil one day saw Jesus coming and said, "I know Who Thou art, Thou Holy One of God." The devil believes, but he is not converted, because his faith is not a converting faith. What kind of faith then, is converting faith? It is faith which compels you to do things in the face of ridicule and scorn in order that

you may know Jesus, Whom to know is Life Eternal. Paul says, that I may know Him I count everything but dross! I trample underfoot and cast out of my way and leave behind every obstacle; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. You have got to get there, my brother, my sister. You have got to get such faith; heart-faith.

This kind of faith has in it the element of committal. It means leaning with all your weight on Jesus. It means venturing your all on the atoning blood of the Lamb. It means staking everything on the Word of a faithful God. It means risking much but gaining more. The soul that takes such a risk will never be let down. "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit," says Isaiah. To bring back a soul from thence means something. What kind of a faith is yours? Has it saved you? Mine has! It has saved me! Once I was blind, and now I can see.

I said to a man who came to see me once, "Are you a Christian man?" "I think so," he replied. "Have you had your dinner?" I then queried. "Yes!" he answered, promptly. "If you are converted you are just as sure of the first as of the last," I said. "A man cannot pass through the pangs of the New Birth without knowing it." Blessed be God, there is no doubt about conversion, no uncertainty about it. Where is your faith? Where are your works, that you have not the joy which the assurance brings? If Church-membership, your presence at the Communion Table, your fellowship with the Saints, has not convinced you that you are a Child of God, what

is the use of these things? Give them up until you realise the joy of the New Birth. I am not asking you to give up a certainty for an uncertainty. I am asking you to part with your uncertainty for a great assurance. I want you to possess the faith which saves, which brings you to Christ.

If you want such a faith, you must meet the conditions. Here is the unalterable word of God "Who-soever shall call upon the name of the Lord SHALL be saved!" This means you—and it means now! Meet the condition! Make the surrender! Cast out the unclean thing! Separate yourself from the sin that is spoiling your life and holding you back from Jesus. I once offered to shake hands with a little boy, who held out to me his closed fist. He could not offer his extended hand because it held tightly four little marbles. He could not shake hands with me because of his playthings. My brother, my sister, there is a Hand held out to you here and now! It is red with blood, and bears the imprints of a nail. It has been held out to you for years and you could never clasp it because of your playthings. The child had his marbles—what have you got? In the name of Christ I beseech you to let everything go and take hold of Christ's extended hand. It will lift you up from the pit—out of the miry clay of sin—and set your feet upon the rock of a full salvation. It will save you! Nothing else *can* save you! Here is your great opportunity. God give you saving faith to allow you to grasp it.

III

THE MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH

III

THE MARKS OF THE NEW BIRTH

TEXT: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

First Epistle of John. Chapter 3, Verse 10.

Please note also the first verse of the same chapter—

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

Just as the world did not know Jesus, and does not know Him now, it will not know those who are like Him. That is always true. If the world knows you, and likes you—if you are popular with the world and are one with the spirit of the world—something is the matter with your professed religion.

"The world knoweth us not because it knew Him not."

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not—" Let me say at once that those words are written to people who are born again. They are addressed to people inside the spiritual circle, friends of Jesus, intimate with Him, knowing His mind, doing His will; people who have entered into fellowship with Him.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as he is.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

"And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins: and in Him is no sin.

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Now we come to the test: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." So you see that there is a difference. Some of us have not recognised this yet. We are so blind that we cannot see this difference. We are so fast asleep, so encased in our own selfish, easygoing lives, that we do not see. The devil has thrown us into a stupor. We do not realise the difference which God points out. Sometimes we are anxious to get people into what we call "the Church" and have not emphasised this difference; we have not made candidates for church membership realise what it really means to come into fellowship with the people of God.

"In *this* the children of God are manifest." In

what? Read the ninth verse, and you find the explanation. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin. . . . He cannot sin because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." In what? In their attitude toward right and wrong. In their love for the one and their hatred for the other. In *this* the children of God are revealed—recognised. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning."

Before you call yourself a "child of God" see to it that you examine your own heart; see that your heart comes up to the test. Measure yourself by the Word of God, by the light of God, by the demands of Calvary, by the authority of the Holy Ghost. Be honest with the test. Compare yourself with these qualifications and say, "Dare I, in the face of such conditions, hope to walk with God?" Am I a constant witness to the cleansing power of the precious blood? Have I got the witness of the Spirit? Have I turned my back upon the things which are not of God? Have I thrown out of my life the things which God does not approve? Am I honestly seeking to obey the light? "In *this* the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." The difference between the saved man and the unsaved man is that the saved man runs from sin; the unsaved man runs after it. The saved man hates sin; the unsaved man loves it. The saved man resists the devil; the unsaved man goes after him and says, "Can you give me a job, old gentleman?" He seeks the devil, the things of the devil.

This is what every man does who is not saved. I appeal to your judgment. A man stands revealed by the things he does. People came to talk to Jesus and the question was asked, "Do you know to whom you are talking?" The reply was, "We have Abraham for our father." Jesus said, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and *his* work ye do." The work a man does settles to whom he belongs. "In this the children of God are manifest." *There* is the difference,—in your attitude toward light, in your attitude toward darkness. How do you stand with God? I do not ask how you stand with the Church, or with some other religious institution. I am appealing to something deeper and more important than that. I am not asking if you stand all right with men. I am asking if you are standing right with God. Because that is what makes the difference. "In this the children of God are manifest; and the children of the devil."

Whose company have you been keeping to-day? What kind of letters did you write? What did you say to your stenographer when you were alone together? If you are a man of God you will treat that girl with as much respect as you treat your own mother or daughter. In your attitude toward right and in your attitude toward wrong you will stand revealed. The child of God cannot (mark the word—cannot) commit sin! This does not mean you cannot do wrong if you want to. It means that you won't want to! That is where the "cannot" comes in.

I saw a mother a little while ago, with a baby in her arms. If I had gone to her and told her to throw her little one on the floor she would have said, "I can-

not!" She had sufficient strength to do it, and ample opportunity to do it, but the more I urged and insisted, the more emphatic she would be in her refusal. Of course, she could do it if she wanted to do it; but she did not want to hurt the child. That mother had something in her heart which would prevent her harming the child. What was that? Love! Exactly! When a child of God is tempted to do wrong, he says, "I cannot." I love God! That is what the apostle means! He "cannot." He is born again. In this, I am the sworn enemy of wrong. If I am the child of God, I cannot compromise with wrong, I cannot give in to it, anywhere—in the church or out of it—in the home or in the world. That is the inevitable attitude of the child of God. I know this is a strong statement, but it is not too strong. I am not making it stronger than the New Testament and the Holy Ghost make it. "In *this* the children of God are manifest."

A word about the certainty of this knowledge. I do not believe in that mongrel doctrine which implies that you can be a Christian without knowing it. If you can get religion without knowing it, you can lose it without missing it. You did not get married without knowing it. There are three classes of people in every church. Ask one class if they are "born again" and they will say, "I hope so." You don't "hope" you have had your dinner, do you? What a man is he does not "hope to be." A man only hopes for what he has not got already. If I put this same question to another class of people they will say, "Well, I would not like to be sure." But the New Testament wants

them to be sure. In the certainty of new birth the child of God is revealed. "I would not like to be sure, but I think I am!" Do you belong to the "I-think-so's?"

There is still another class, and one to which I belong; those who positively know. Ask any member of this class if he or she is born again and there is a new light upon their faces as they reply, "Glory to God, I know I am!" These are the people who keep the Church alive! They are the best people in any church; the people who will attend prayer-meetings. In *this*—the knowledge of things, the assurance of things, the children of God are manifest. When I was converted I knew it. I was sure of it. So, also, is everybody who is born again.

I was talking to some travelling men once on board a train. They were playing cards. I overheard something said about Christian people, and about the Christian Church. They were saying things not very complimentary. Then they said something about Jesus. I said, "Steady, there, friends! Don't say anything about Him! What do you know of Him? He is the best friend I ever had in the world. He came to me when I was nobody and saved me. The joy of His presence is in my soul at this moment, and it is more than I can put into words." One of them said, "You are dreaming!" I said, "Am I? Then for God's sake hush! Do not wake me! Let me dream on! Waking would bring such awful loneliness and pain!" But I was not dreaming. It is a fact of eternity that Christ died, and rose from the dead for my justification and I know it. Thank God for this knowledge of things

—this absolute assurance. Do you know it? Are you sure of it? “In this the children of God are manifest,” revealed, recognised. If you don’t know it, ask why you have not received an assurance of the new birth. If you don’t know it, one of two things must be true. You are hugging some sin or doubt. If you have honestly surrendered, you will trust Jesus. If you try to trust Him before surrendering, the trust won’t work. It is killed by the affection for the wrong. Let the wrong go and then you will be able to trust Him, and your trust in Him will bring certainty.

I wonder if you will understand me. The people who are born where a language is spoken all understand it. If you are only connected with a church, without the new life, you will not understand what I am talking about. I was preaching in one very large city some time ago and at the close of the service a lady came to me and said, “Do you know we have an encampment of gipsies out in one of the suburbs? Would you like to see them?” I said, “I am going to see them if they are there.” Next morning she took me out to see the encampment. When we reached a little rise in the road where we could see the wagons and the tents I turned to her and said, “There is not a gipsy there!” “But,” said she, “there are the wagons and the tents!” “Yes,” said I, “but they are not gipsy wagons, or gipsy tents. There is a unique style about the wagons and the tents of the real gipsies which is lacking there. A gipsy would not have a tent like those; or a wagon like those.” The lady replied, “Well, I am surprised. I thought all

people who lived in wagons were gipsies." When we got right up to the encampment, we alighted, and I walked in and began to speak in my mother tongue. Hearing a strange voice they looked at me but they did not understand me. There was one woman among them who was quick enough to size up the situation and she said, "I know you, you are the gipsy preacher. I was not born a gipsy but I just joined them." I said, "If you had been born a gipsy you would have understood my language." And that is just the difference between joining the Church and being born in it—in becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus. Do you see that now? "In *this* the children of God are manifest." In this certainty, this knowledge, this assurance of the soul—the new birth. But if you cannot point to the very spot where it happened—if you cannot fix the time to the minute—just say, "Jesus, I love you!" Here is the Scripture for that invitation: "He that loveth is born of God." Blessed be His name. In the certainty of it, in the assurance of it, the sunshine of it, the gladness of it, the abounding joy of it, the children of God are manifest.

"Yes," but you say, "I want to be a little more sure!" Well, let me give you some new birth-marks. They are always to be found on the child of God. Here is the first. He that is born again abideth in Him. Is *that* mark on *you*? Have you got your roots and springs in Jesus? Is your very life in Jesus? Tennyson was once walking with a friend through his garden when the friend said to him, "What is Jesus Christ to you?" Tennyson pointed to a lovely little pansy growing at his feet and replied, "Just what

the sun is to the life of that little flower. That is what Jesus is to me. He is my all in all." Can you say that? Can you say, "Begone, vain world, thou hast no charms for me?" Or does the world and its charms still allure you? Here is another birth-mark! He that is born of God, overcometh the world! I was speaking to a young girl some time ago and she said, "I am concerned about my soul. I want to be a Christian!" Then she pointed to her companions, six of them, all daughters of wealthy parents. "Something tells me that I cannot go on living an idle frivolous life"—she said—"but if I change—must I give them up?" "Not if you are really converted," I said, "they will give you up instead." Was I right? I know I was—and you know it too. It is not my business to preach a milk-and-water gospel. You would despise a man who is afraid to tell the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. And here is what God's Book says—"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him." Here is another birth-mark! He that is born of God loveth his brethren! "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love." Is that mark on you? Or are you cynical, critical, unkind, spiteful? "Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither is he that loveth not his brother." Is that mark upon you? I pause that you may examine your own heart in the light of His workings.

Here is still another birth-mark! He that is born of God keepeth himself in the love of God. If you were a gardener and had a beautiful flower which you were trying to bring to perfection with the aid of artificial heat, you would know that your plant required

a certain temperature—or it would not thrive, nor grow. The temperature must suit its needs, or the plant would be lost. So he that is born of God, keepeth himself in the love of God, lest he lose the plant which God has rooted in him. “In *this* the children of God are manifest.”

Can I explain these things to you? Ask the little daisy to explain the sun, and what do you think it will say? If it had a voice, I know what it would say. It would say, “No! I cannot explain the sun, but I shall be very grateful to you if you will stand out of the way and let it shine upon me.” “O Sun of Righteousness,” shine Thou upon us.

One other birth-mark! “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself . . . ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we say Abba, Father.” I shall never forget when the first baby came to my house. I was a very young father. Babies were a new thing to me. I wanted that one to walk before it could stand, and it looked for the first few weeks as if I were forgotten entirely—for baby and mother were one. Mother was baby’s world; baby was mother’s world. Young fathers know all about it. They have seen it—and the older ones too. The dearest sight this side the “gates of pearl” is a pure mother with her first baby. She lives for it day and night. She dreams of it. She watches the little one day by day, cares for it; yes, just “mothers” it, and so the weeks and months pass until, one day, to your great surprise, coaxed and taught by mother, the baby says “Da-da!” Just like that! God’s great nursing mother! The Holy Spirit comes into

the newly-surrendered, trustful heart, and teaches it to say, "Abba, Father!" "In *this* the children of God are manifest." Have you got that? Is that your experience? Do you long for it? Are you hungry for it? Are you crying for it? It is within your reach, if you will but pay the price. God help you to do so. Mercy's door is open to you now. The gifts of God are yours for the asking. Turn to God, to Calvary, and the new life. I cannot do this for you—you must do it for yourselves. Do it now, and then men and women will say of you that you bear upon your body, yea, and in your soul, the new birth-marks of a child of God. God help you.

IV

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

IV

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

TEXT: "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

St. John. Chapter 16, Verse 13.

Quietly and reverently I want to speak to you about the greatest power in the world—the power of God's Holy Spirit. The great need of the Church to-day is a fresh baptism of that power; another Pentecost which shall bring men and women in thousands "bound with gold chains to the feet of God."

I often wonder whether, to-day, Christians realise what that power really is—if they do rightful honour to the Third Person in the Holy Trinity. I went to visit an old saint of God some time ago. He had been in bed for years, but he is mentally alive to the need of his day and generation, and has a wonderful insight into the things that belong to God, and to the Kingdom of God. He keeps in constant touch with the forward march of Christ's army. Just before I left him he said to me, "What do you think the Church of God needs more than anything else in the world to-day?" I said, "Another Pentecost!" He thought a little while and then said, "Yes! And after that?" "Another Pentecost!" I replied. Then he asked, "And what then, do you think?" I said, "Still another Pentecost!"

I know that my answer was the right one. More than ever to-day do we, as church members, need to

realise the presence of the Holy Spirit in our midst; to apply the power of that Spirit to the work of winning men and women for God. We preachers ought to preach more than we do about the Spirit and His Power. How many sermons do you hear in a year on the Person of the Holy Spirit? We preachers should make constant reference to the power of Pentecost. If you are a "sermon-taster" in the best sense of that phrase, and if you read volumes of sermons, you must be impressed by the fact that for every one sermon preached and published on the Person and Power of the Holy Ghost, there are hundreds preached and published on all other subjects imaginable. And I picked up a Church Hymnal the other day, with one thousand hymns in it, and turned to those specially dedicated to the Holy Spirit and found that these numbered but twenty-five in the whole collection. Yet the presence and power of the Holy Spirit is vital and fundamental to the growth and development of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Without the Holy Ghost there is no Church: no life, pulsating, energising power to lead men and women to Jesus and keep them in contact with saving grace. Without the Holy Ghost we might as well burn up our churches and our Bibles and give up playing with religion. Yet we often seem to think that we can leave the Holy Ghost out of our Church programme and that explains why we also find that the Church is cold, dead and without fruit.

I wonder what would happen if Paul came and preached in some of our Churches and felt our spiritual pulse, what would he say? He would say

what he said to the Church at Ephesus. He would know there was something lacking in our Christian life and service and would ask, "Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?" And some of us, like those Ephesians, would have to admit that we had not heard of Him. Yet it is the Holy Ghost Who opens the eyes of the blind; Who heals the broken-hearted; Who uplifts the fallen; and Who gives to weak, erring mortals strength, grace and courage to tread the highways of life with the feet of those who conquer.

Do *you* know the Holy Spirit? Jesus said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." "It is expedient for you that I go." Do you realise that? Christ also said, "Greater works than these shall ye do because I go to My Father." Christ knew He was going to send the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost is the essential gift of God the Father and God the Son to the Church on earth: and to the loving, obedient hearts of those who worship in spirit and in truth. When the Holy Ghost comes to you, you will know about it. Life will never be exactly the same to you afterwards. Your life will be fuller, sweeter, more lovable, more gracious than ever before. You will be a more conspicuous Christian—or, if I may put it in another way, more conspicuously Christian. The moment God's Holy Spirit enters the human heart and takes abode there, life is what it ought to be, peaceful, fruitful, pure and Christ-like.

Jesus came to earth to reveal the Father. What

a wonderful revelation He gave of the character and attributes of our loving God. The Holy Ghost came to reveal Jesus, Whom to know is life eternal; to interpret His mind to us, and to teach us His will. No man has heard Jesus but by the Holy Ghost. No man can understand Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost. No man will ever see Jesus unless the Holy Ghost touches his eyes and clarifies his vision. You cannot know your Lord in any way but by the way of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to reveal the Father, I say, and the Holy Ghost has come to reveal Jesus to the world. But who shall reveal the Holy Ghost to the world? Who but the men and women in whose hearts the Holy Spirit reigns and rules? It is when you show by your life and conduct that you have received the Holy Ghost, that you possess in your life a presence and power not of this world, when men and women recognise in you a likeness to your risen Lord, it is then that the Holy Spirit will be revealed to those who know Him not.

You may as well strive to bore a hole through a stone wall with a candle as to expect sinners to be converted apart from the power of the Holy Ghost. But the Church which possesses that power will become as terrible as an army with banners against the hosts of sin. The world will know that you possess it and if the Holy Ghost is in your own heart, everybody around you, and those nearest to you especially, will realise your influence and power.

X Are you making anybody in your own home realise that you know God? If not your religion is not a real religion; it is an illusion, a deception. But the

Holy Ghost can produce in you the likeness to Christ, and the winsomeness of Christ, His love for holiness, His love for the brethren, His desire to heal and save. All the meanness in your heart will go. All the ugliness in your character will disappear. All the thorns and nettles in what should be God's garden will be rooted up and done away with. You will become pure and sweet and calm and tender and attractive in all your ways. Best of all, you will commend Christ by the goodness of your life and character wherever you go. That is how the Holy Ghost, working in you and through you, reveals Christ to sinful men.

It is a wonderful thing to know and reveal Jesus. It is a wonderful thing to have a soul and body which are not a tomb of buried possibilities, but a temple of the Holy Ghost. Do you want to know the secret of the barrenness of your life; of its weakness; of its joylessness; of your spiritual unattractiveness and lack of wooing power? Is it not because you are not obedient to the Holy Ghost? The Spirit will not stay with the disobedient disciple. The Holy Spirit is given to them that obey. The disobedient man cannot walk with God. The Holy Spirit cannot live in a heart that is filled with thoughts of the world, and the desire for worldly things. How can you expect the Holy Spirit to abide in your heart if you neglect the opportunities for Christian fellowship and worship on the Sabbath Day? How can you expect the Holy Spirit to abide in your heart if you take Communion on Sunday morning and go to the pictures on Sunday night? How can you expect the Holy Spirit to abide in your heart if you prefer the jazz-ball to the prayer-

meeting? How can you expect the Holy Spirit to abide in your heart amid the sordid excitement of the race-meeting? How can you expect the Holy Spirit to abide in your heart if your thoughts and desires are unholy and unclean? Remember that in the religion of Jesus Christ there is no opportunity to sit on the fence, or to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. To attempt to claim fellowship with the Holy Spirit and with "the god of this world" is sheer blasphemy. The Holy Ghost must reign in your heart and life solely if you are to possess His fulness, His grace, and His power. You cannot serve Christ one day and the devil the next. You cannot hold on to Christ with one hand and to Satan's black paw with the other. The Spirit-filled life is not a life like that.

Listen, "Touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a Father unto you." Note the promise and the conditions. If you want the Holy Ghost to come and take possession of you, you must pay the price. You must get rid of the things He cannot be with. I know that will mean sacrifice, but it also means Christ. I never will preach a cheap religion! I cannot preach compromise with the truth of God! It is my business and yours to maintain the standard of the Cross and to aim at the heights. God help us to do it. We must have ideals in life. We must shake the dust from our feet. We must put on our beautiful garments. We must learn the secret of holiness. We must strive to become worthy to walk with God. The Holy Ghost will make all these things possible to us. We cannot do them of ourselves, but

the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us shall do this for us, and more.

Now let me again ask you, "Did you receive the Holy Ghost when you believed?" Would it not make a wonderful difference to our Church, to the place in which we live, and to the place where we work, if we were people filled with the Holy Ghost? Would it not make a wonderful difference if every preacher in our churches, and every office-bearer and every member of the Church lived the spirit-filled life? If our Church and all within it were imbued with Spirit power from on high, we should have Pentecostal days and Pentecostal ways all over again. "And when the days of Pentecost were fully come . . . they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

When that glad day comes once again, the whole city in which you live will be on its knees crying for mercy. Then, when you pray, you will be doing much more than saying your prayers. You will not pray for men to hear you. You will walk and talk with God. You will wrestle with the Angel of the Covenant for the souls of sinful men. You will challenge God with the might of prevailing faith, and find Him abundantly able to do for you more than you can either ask or think.

Have you heard the legend which represents the devil in the garb of a friar preaching the gospel? It relates that an old saint put the question to him, "What you, the devil, preaching the gospel?" And the devil replied, "Don't you know that there is nothing so hardening and damning as preaching the gospel

without unction, and as I have none, my preaching will only be the savour of death." The great need of all Christians to-day is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost makes the Saint. The Holy Ghost makes men and women fearless of the devil. And when you get filled with the Holy Ghost you will not need other men to preach to you and for you. You will be doing the preaching yourselves. You will be wooing and winning others into the Kingdom.

How will He come? How shall you know of His coming? Listen! Some years ago a young artist was trying hard to paint a picture which should be his masterpiece, and worthy of his master, whom he loved. The master was away, and the young student worked hard to have the picture completed before his return, but something always went wrong—he could not adequately express his thoughts upon the canvas. One morning he arrived at the studio early, and upon withdrawing the covering from the unfinished painting, was thrilled and delighted to find that the picture was complete and perfect. Turning quietly to his fellow-students he said, "The Master has come! Only *his* hand could have made the picture so perfect." That is how the Spirit of Christ will come into your heart and life, and this is what He will do. He will perfect all your imperfections and transfer your highest dreams for yourself upon the canvas of your daily life. May you awake even now to the fact that He is with you and declare to the world about you that "The Master has come." He who will make out of your crude, imperfect character, a masterpiece of grace for His glory,

V

THE MODEL CHRISTIAN

V

THE MODEL CHRISTIAN

TEXTS: "And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

"And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets."

St. Luke. Chapter 5, Verses 1 and 2.

Please notice they were washing their *own* nets. Some people have been washing mine for years, and I should like to suggest they pay a little more attention to their own. Men and women who mind their own business often succeed because they have but few competitors.

Net-washing is a good thing, especially if the fishermen had caught nothing recently.

"And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

"Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

"And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing"—

X Simon was a Church official, and so he said, "We have not caught anything lately." If I came to some

Church officials and asked them if they had caught any converts lately they might reply "No! But we caught some a few years ago and have been trying to cure them ever since!"

"And have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

"And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes; and their net brake.

"And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. . . .

"And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

Now turn back to the first verse:

"The people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God." What was it in Jesus which made Him so attractive? What was it in Him that made the people throng round Him? How was it that they could not keep away from Him?

You know how, in the olden times, the prophets of God looked down through the ages with the telescope of faith; and looked forward to the time of His great appearing and said, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." And when He came He said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." Jesus could not be hid. What was it about this man that made Him so wonderful, so magnetic, so majestic, so helpful, and so transforming, as to

give hope to everybody who came near Him? What was it? Do we not need that quality—that power? What was it that made Jesus the centre and the soul of life and uplift to everybody who got a look at Him, or came somewhere near Him, and who complied with His terms and conditions?

Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me." "Learn of Me!" You and I who profess to love Him must possess the same qualities which made Him so attractive and so lovable. When we come anywhere near broken manhood and womanhood, there should be something in us to remind others of Him. That is Religion! That is the religion of the New Testament. To be a Christ of to-day is the need. "For me, to live is Christ." The word "Christian" means "likeness to Him." I wonder if any one wants always to be where you are? I wonder if any broken heart or troubled spirit wants to take your hand or to look into your face and catch a little bit of the music of your thoughts. I wonder if any one wants to sit for a while in your soothing, restful presence! You are a member of the church. Your name is on the Church Roll. You have declared in your most positive and public manner which side you are on. You take Communion. But is there any likeness in *you* to your Master and Lord?

Church-going—what does it mean? Church-going is to make you more like Jesus. Bible-reading is to make you more like Jesus. Prayer, communion, singing songs of praise, is to crystallise men and women into likeness to Him. If this is not the result of your religion, it is ineffective—it becomes a fraud

and an insult to humanity. The people flocked to Jesus, they crowded around Him; they were glad to be seen about Him, and to hear Him speak. If Jesus came to the city to-morrow morning, if it were known that he stood somewhere in the great metropolis with the marks of the nails on His hands and the open wound in His side and the thorn-crown pressed upon His brow—the people would not rush off to see the races or to witness the latest sensation—they would seek Jesus. I know they would! Wherever Jesus is, the people will be. When Jesus comes to a city or town, a hamlet, a church, or a home, and is enthroned there, the people flock to greet Him. No one can keep them away! Some one will say, "How is it, then, that people will not come near me?" Is it not because you are such a caricature of what you ought to be? Instead of being like Jesus, you are unlike Him in every respect.

A lady once said to me, "Tell me where I am wrong. I am not a Church-member but I want to be a Christian. There are moments when I hunger to be a good woman: when I thirst to be an out-and-out Christian, just as my Mother used to be. But if I go to church I see the same people there as myself—people I see everywhere else. So far as I can see, the only difference between some of these people and myself is that they take Communion and their names are on the Church Roll—and mine is not. If I go to a dance they are there. If I go to the races, they are there. Wherever I go I find them. I do not want to get mixed up with that kind of religion. If I get religion at all, my own common-sense tells me that I have to

try to be like Jesus!" Exactly! To be like Jesus is to be a common-sense Christian.

A young girl graduate once said to me, "I want to be a Christian. My father and mother are both Church-members, both dear, good people, but I have never heard them pray. I have never even heard them asking a blessing at the meal-table. I cannot go to my father and mother and talk to them about my soul." Why? Her parents were not like Jesus, who prayed until the bloody sweat stood out upon His forehead on the night of Gethsemane. If your child cannot come and talk with you about the deepest and most sacred of all human desires and emotions—the high and holy things of the Spirit, which affect the soul—come in the most critical period of her life and at the most important psychological moment of her spiritual development—there is something wrong with your religion, and the sooner you find it out the better. You are not being at all like Jesus.

If Jesus came here, would anybody go to Him? When Jesus comes into your life and transforms it and makes it beautiful, somebody will see it, somebody will know. For there is nobody quite like Jesus, and when He comes into your life, He is there and you cannot hide Him. If He is lifted up in your life, He will attract. You will be easy to live with. The ugly and wicked spirit will depart and you will be calm and loving, gentle, tender and gracious—like Jesus.

Little children will know. If I go into a home and a little child climbs upon my knee I thank God. If a weary man in a strange country shakes hands with me, I am complimented. If some poor woman on the

street—I don't mean poor in pocket, but poor in spirit—destitute in heart, starved in soul, poverty-stricken in will, crowned by the sin of lust and fast living—if that poor woman, once pure and good, wanted to climb out of the gutter, out of the "Slough of Despond," to get away from her iniquity, wanted to talk with some one and enquire the way to Jesus, would she, do you think, come and knock at the door of your beautiful Gothic Church? Would she? I will tell you where, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, such a woman would go to find Jesus—she would go to the Salvation Army!

Is that a reflection on you—on us? We were here before the Salvation Army came into existence. Has she lost faith in our kind of religion? If so, we shall have to re-establish faith in that erring woman's heart and mind, and we shall never do this until we get right with Jesus ourselves. Would to God that every Church could revive that atmosphere which induces every fallen man and woman to exclaim, "I believe in you!" Unless that revival does come, you will never do all the good you might do. That is religion! Little children know. If your religion does not make you tender, gracious and considerate, it is not a true religion. Suppose some poor sinner—or even a member of your Church Board—were to come to you and say, "I am not right!" What would be your attitude toward him? Would it be critical? No man moves toward God unless he is led by the Spirit, drawn by the Holy Ghost. When he does come, do not get in his way. Don't say anything to him that will hinder his coming. If you are going to be Christ-like you

will be tender, sensitive, responsive, alert and ready to advise and help. You will do anything to bring a sinful man or woman a little nearer to Jesus. To be Christ-like—that is Christianity. Have you that sort of religion? Can you pray with your family? If you cannot, what is the trouble? Can you kneel down with a clear conscience in the presence of those whom you love, and who love you, at home? It is the most natural thing in the world, for a man or woman who is right with God to pray. God save little children from a prayerless home! Can you pray? You can, if you are like Jesus. Can you speak to your friends and neighbours about Christ and salvation, and about getting right with God? If not, why? You are a Church member. What has sealed your lips? What is paralysing your heart? What is strangling your enthusiasm? Is it the paralysis of the second death? What is preventing your witness for Jesus? If you are Christ-like—you will be about your Father's business. The world is looking at you. Angels and a cloud of witnesses are looking on from the battlements of the sky. Some day God Himself, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, will demand from you an explanation of your service. If you are like Jesus you will bear your witness for our Father, God.

Christ-likeness is a wonderful thing. You know it when you see it. The way to get right with God is to get rid of something, to get rid of self, and sin, and of the world. When you get there, you will begin to be like Him. When you come to Him in truth you will be rid of pride; church-pride, as well as worldly pride; and of love for the church's reputation, and

love for your own respectability. That is helping to keep people from Christ in these days. Let us all, ministers and people, get rid of this and every other besetting sin, let us long to be like Him—to fall in love with His beauty, His purity, and His holiness. There was a theory that was prevalent in ancient Greece to the effect that a person is so affected by contact and environment that beautiful statues and beautiful pictures were essential to every home where the inmates wanted to be perfect in form and stature. This may not apply to the body, but it does apply to the soul. It is only that man or woman who knows the secret of His presence, who continually walks with God—who has learned to love Jesus as a constant Companion and Friend—who grows in spirit like Him. God help us all to reflect His glory.

VI

THE MODEL CHURCH

VI

THE MODEL CHURCH

TEXT: "And when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together."

Acts. Chapter 4, Verse 31.

I want you first of all to read the wonderful chapter from which my text is taken. There you will find an account of the model church—the Church as Jesus would have it be. Note for a moment the characteristics of that Church. "And when they had prayed the place was shaken. . . ." These people knew how to pray. That is evident. Their Church was in truth the House of Prayer. There was great unity within that Church. They were "of one heart and one soul." They were concentrated as well as consecrated. They gave of their substance freely. They were generous souls within that Church. There was great grace there also. And surely there was great power. "And with great power gave the Apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Note the five great fundamentals which go to make up the model Church of Jesus Christ: Prayer, Unity, Generosity, Grace, and Power. If you want your Church to come up to the Apostolic standard, it must possess all these characteristics.

In the model Church, therefore, the people will love to pray. They will love that more than anything else. They would rather go to a prayer-meeting than to a

place of entertainment. When the Church of God uses the Apostolic standard it will be a praying Church. That will be its chief characteristic. These people prayed!

When they prayed something happened. Some of us would be surprised if anything striking happened as a result of our prayers. But, you see, I am speaking of the Apostolic Church; the sort of Church you say you would like to have in your locality. I am speaking, not of a Church which had grown conventional and cold, but of an arrestive, conspicuous, outstanding, convincing, converting Church. And the people within this Church were so strange and peculiar in their manner and actions that when the outward world first caught a glimpse of them, they said, they are all drunken with new wine. But the leader of the Church replied no! This is not the result of drunkenness; our condition is the fulfilment of the Divine Word; we are filled with the unspeakable joy of salvation; we are about our Lord's business. Paul said, "Unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all men see. . . ." If we, who are in the ministry, are not making men and women "see," are not opening the eyes of the spiritually blind to the misery of their condition and to the possibilities of Divine Grace, our Churches are as unlike the model Church, the Apostolic Church, as they can be. The business of the Church is to bring light to them that sit in darkness—to make men "see." And if that business is not being carried on with success, it is

about time we tried new methods, or went out of business altogether.

The first Church, then, was a praying Church. It was a united Church; a generous Church; a gracious Church. Grace was upon it; the grace of God, which made its members rich beyond the dreams of avarice. They possessed "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Or, let me put it another way. The dew of God's grace rested upon them so that they became drenched with power—the power of the Holy Spirit. The moment you came into contact with them, you felt that you were in touch with a "live wire." Are your Church-members like that?

Prayer, unity, generosity, grace and power were the outstanding characteristics of the Apostolic Church. Are they the outstanding characteristics of your Church? Do men and women enter Sunday after Sunday and say, "I am in the place of Prayer—there is the quickening atmosphere of Prayer all about me." Do they realise that the spirit of unity exists there? Are they conscious of the generosity, the grace, and the power of those whose names are on the Church Roll, and who worship there Sunday after Sunday? Are you an office-bearer in your Church? If so, I wonder if you ever realise that you are an under-shepherd of the flock. I wonder if you ever realise that God has put you into that office for His glory? Do you ever say to yourself, "I stand in this Church as a representative of My Lord and Master to them who know Him not; who suspect Him; who misunderstand Him; who turn their backs upon Him." Are you conscious of the fact that you are here to

interpret the Spirit of Jesus to those who enter your Church? Do you know why they chose men to be office-bearers in the model Church of which I am speaking? They were chosen because they were good men and full of the Holy Ghost. Are you that kind? Because if you are I will tell you some of the things you will do, or have done already, in co-operation with your minister, for the good of the community and the salvation of the people round about you.

First, you will strive to know every house in the district. You will want to know who lives in that house. You will know whether the parents go to Church and the children to Sunday School. That is your business. God has placed His church in the midst of the district to be a citadel of spiritual power; to be a place where penitent sinners may find refuge, and refreshment, and strength to live rightly. It is not the bricks and mortar and cement and stonework which constitute the Church; it is the living, redeemed, sanctified men and women who have fellowship with their Lord. *You* are the Church! And if you are good men and true, filled with the Holy Spirit, as office-bearers in the Church you will seek to know something about the men and women and the little children around you who want what the Church stands for—grace, strength, comfort, power, salvation. You will have their names upon your visiting list and their needs upon your heart, and their salvation will be your chief concern. You will visit them and pray with them, and speak to them about the unsearchable riches which you possess in Christ Jesus. You will be God's representative for the salvation of these, His people.

"Oh!" but some one says, "I cannot do that. I did not undertake to do such things when I consented to take office in the Church." Why not? You would undertake so much, and more, if you wanted a man's vote at the next election. You would find out where he lived, and call to see him. You would flatter him a bit, pay him attention, keep visiting him until you were fairly sure he was on your side, and when the day of the election came round, you would not be content to let him walk to the polling-booth, you would give him a lift in your motor-car, to make sure he got there all right. Yes, but what do you do when you want him to come to Church? You merely pull a bell or put out a bill! You don't often send a motor for him, or even let him know that you are anxious to have him attend your Church. And the man says to himself, "When these people wanted my vote they came and saw me and made a fuss over me, but when it is my soul they are after, they don't take half the trouble, or any trouble." When you want that man as much for his soul as you did for his vote you will do anything, go anywhere, to win him for Jesus Christ. When you have the atmosphere and spirit of the early Church in your Church you will do everything possible to bring men and women to God. Do you know these people who remain outside your Church? Perhaps there is a barrier between you, and if it is ever to be broken down, you will have to do it, you will have to make these people feel that you really want them. That is your business, you church officials. Find out every man and woman and child in the district who does not go

to Church and then lay it upon your conscience that you do everything you can do to bring them into fellowship with God and God's people in His House of Worship, Prayer, and Praise.

I want to tell you something else you office-bearers would be doing, if you were like the members of the first Apostolic Church. You would come to Church every Sunday morning a little earlier in order to meet in prayer with your minister, and that would have a mighty effect upon the day's services, upon the preacher, and upon the congregation. What a wonderful uplift your preacher would receive if he knew that every office-bearer in the Church spent an hour in his vestry praying for him, that his message might be filled with power from the Holy Ghost. That is your business. It is one way in which you can construct your model Church. Here is another. You can watch carefully the spiritual life of the Church, guard it at every point, stimulate it by prayer and godly conversation and see to it that nothing is allowed to enter the Church to pollute the spiritual atmosphere or to smother the promptings of the Holy Ghost. You will think also, of the needs of the weakest member. You will be sharing his burden. It is the business of an office-bearer to build up the spiritual life of the Church, to foster it, develop it, refresh it, energise it. By wise counsel, godly example, and consecration you must live up to your high calling as good men, filled with the Holy Ghost.

Another thing you will do—you will support your minister, be loyal to him. You won't discuss his sermons critically over the meal-table on Sunday. When

he has said something that hits you, you will not accuse him of being bigoted and narrow-minded. I have known preachers whose hearts were broken and whose hair was whitened because of the lack of sympathy and support of the office-bearers of the Church. I have known Churches to be robbed and rendered desolate of spiritual influence and power through the inconsistency of the office-bearers. Pray God that your Church may not be thus wronged by you.

Again, there will be no converting power within your Church, no building-up and strengthening of Christian graces of character, if the spiritual atmosphere is vitiated. You must see to it that all its windows are open to the winds of Heaven that the breath of God may have full play within its four walls.

Another thing you will do. You will get together as often as possible and say to each other, "Where are the people who attend this Church and are anxious about their souls?" You will compare notes. You will say to Brother So-and-So, "Do you know anybody in your district who is *almost* persuaded to be a Christian? If so, let us kneel down and pray for him." You will discuss the spiritual prospects of your Church and the community round about it as earnestly, as intelligently, as enthusiastically, as you would discuss your own prospects in business. If you conducted your business affairs in the same manner as some of you conduct the affairs of your Church—of the King's business—I am afraid you would soon go bankrupt. Keeness in building up a Church means that we are alive, and slackness means that we are not alive. God expects us to put the very best service into

the business of His Kingdom, and the men and women who do that get the highest price for their labour. God makes no mistakes on the wage-sheet of His Kingdom, and if you get nothing much out of your work in the Church it means that you put nothing much into it. And you must put first things first. You must see to it that the life of your Church is filled with the Holy Spirit. You must see that the men and women who come to your Church in need of salvation find it.

Many office-bearers are aware how, somehow or other, the spirit of the world creeps into the life of the Church. I urge you with all my heart to stop this drift toward the world. Unless it is stopped, in the end you may be called upon to destroy what you have built up, to set fire to the Church in which you worship and serve. A worldly church is like a painted flower. It has neither life nor fragrance, and is where it is simply to mock and deceive. You have got to stop playing with religion and to love it, if you intend to build up a model Church in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. It will mean prayer, earnest prayer, to do that; it will mean unity, generosity, grace, power, to make your church all that God would have it be.

Now I have striven to show you something of your responsibility as members and office-bearers in the Christian Church. But when you and I have done all I have asked to be done, we fall lamentably short of what we might do, and could do, for our Master and Lord. When I think of His love and His sacrifice for me, and think of the little I have done for Him, I am

ashamed and sorrowful in heart. Realising your high calling, and the standard of your service, do you not feel compelled at this moment to rededicate yourselves to Christ and the work of your Church in a very special manner? And if the outcome of that dedication is what I know it must be and will be—a new atmosphere of love within your Church, a new spirit of helpfulness, a new energy in building up the Kingdom, a new desire to win souls for your Master—then you will find that your Church is making progress toward the standard of the Apostolic Church, and that in all things which make the Church of supreme importance to the nation, the community, and the individual, the one Church in which you serve, and which you love, is becoming truly great—a place of grace, and a place of power for the regeneration of humanity and for the glory of humanity's God.

NOTE: This sermon was preached especially to church officials.

VII
THE REAL KINGDOM

VII

THE REAL KINGDOM

TEXT: "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Epistle to Romans. Chapter 14, Verse 17.

The New Testament religion is a big thing. Many Christians do not grasp the stupendousness of its teaching and have not yet fully realised its saving, pardoning, cleansing, healing power. I am trying to help men and women to get the best out of life: to realise that what we, as preachers, talk about is a living vital thing. I pray that the Holy Spirit may accompany my message with power.

"The Kingdom of God," says the Apostle, "is not meat and drink." That is, it is not an external condition—but an internal condition. It is not a superficial thing—a matter of form and ceremony—but an indwelling grace. It is not an earthly acquirement but a Heavenly gift. It is brought by the Holy Ghost. To use a phrase of tremendous meaning, "It is shed abroad in our hearts!"

"Yes, but—" you say. "I agree with you to some extent, but have we not to 'work out our own salvation'?" Yes, when you get salvation in, the power within. You must get that *in* first. You cannot build houses without bricks and mortar and timber. You

cannot construct a watch without the requisite material. You cannot manifest the character of Christ until the fruits of His Spirit; righteousness, joy and peace are created within you by Almighty God.

This is a very deep experience, this developing within the human soul the fruits of the Spirit. It may be that to speak of it is akin to speaking a foreign language to some Church members, but it ought not to be so. Here is the crux of the whole question. When your Church membership is to you all that it ought to be, when you are alive from the dead and filled with the Holy Spirit, then you will accomplish something. Just as long as the Church of God is content to remain one of many institutions, she will have her little day and die, but the moment she becomes so God-filled and God-inspired that she is unique—when the world looks on and says that she is drunk and mad—at that moment she will be on the highway to capture the world for Christ.

These things are necessary, vitally necessary, to her life and progress: The peace of the Holy Ghost, not a spurious peace, not apathy or insensibility, but the peace that flows like a river; not the peace of the Churchyard or the cemetery, but a living, moving peace that goes forward like a majestic, glorious, overflowing river. Earth's rivers often run dry during a season of drought, and I will tell you why. They all run towards the ocean, and they run dry when there is no rain and the spring has ceased to flow at the source. But the River of God is full of water. Why? Because it flows forth from an ocean, the ocean of His boundless love. The Peace of the Kingdom is like

this river. "Oh, that thou hadst hearkened unto Me. Then had thy peace been like a river!" said the Almighty One. Not a peace like that of the lake, which can be stagnant; but peace like that of a river; movement, ease, quietude. In the movement of God's river there is power and peace.

The peace of the Kingdom is within itself. It does not depend upon outward circumstances or environment. It does not depend upon social standing. It does not depend upon a comfortable income. It does not come as the result of some self-selected task. It is not acquired even by Church work, or by teaching in the Sunday School. I would not allow any person to teach in a Sunday School who did not possess this righteousness, joy and peace which are found within the Kingdom of God. I would refuse to consent that my children, spiritually blind and ignorant as they must be without grace, should be led by a blind leader, ignorant of God's gifts to His followers of righteousness, joy and peace.

Note, then, that the Kingdom of God does not commence with peace, but with righteousness. Peace is a fruit. The same writer says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace!" Peace is a fruit and grows upon a tree, the roots of which are in the Eternal Throne of Righteousness. None can get peace until they are right with God. One indispensable condition of peace is righteousness, harmony, fellowship, reconciliation with God. There can be no real peace until this takes place.

Put God where He ought to be in your life and you will soon gain peace. Put Him upon the throne! If

there is anything within your heart contrary to His will, cast it out. Abandon it. In my daily contact with all sorts and conditions of men and women who are influenced by the gospel message, I have found that, although there may be a dozen things in their life and practice which are wrong, it is generally one dominating, enslaving, masterful passion which keeps them away from God. It is the one thing before which they fall down and worship and make sacrifice; and if that *one* thing is conquered, all the rest yield. That thing must go! It is useless to talk about peace until the occasion for war is put away. If you want peace, you must submit to God's Will. That is the right way to peace. There is no other. You may gain spiritual stupor by other means; the devil may administer an opiate to your soul; he may lull you to sleep and make you cry "Peace," when there is no peace. But if you get right with God, peace will surely follow. You must, then, trample under foot and destroy everything in your heart that opposes the Divine Will. Put God first, and when you have placed Him upon the throne, you will possess strength and power sufficient to do things you formerly thought impossible. And you will try to do them, because you cannot help yourselves. There is something about being right with God which lifts and constrains men to do right to all.

It is a wonderful gospel, this old-time religion. It transcends everything else in the world. It transforms all who give heed to it, and makes them beautiful in life and character. It brings with it the exhilaration of spiritual robustness, the joy of the Lord. When we get into His Kingdom we receive His peace, and

His joy. Have you got this? If so, you will know it and others will know it too. If you are a church-member, your minister will see it in your face. Your wife, or your husband, will see it. The children will know all about it. Your servants will know about it. The errand boy will recognise it. Tradespeople will discover all about it. You will pay your bills. You will keep out of debt. You will go without things rather than get into debt for them, knowing you cannot pay. Religion makes people do right. And the peace of God and the joy of God satisfies you. You will not covet worldly things. Have you got that sort of religion? Because if you have not got that kind of religion, you must have it before you can hope to be of much use to your church, your city, your loved ones and friends. I have as much appreciation of the world as most men have but I know from glad experience that Jesus Christ can satisfy every avenue of a man's life with the unsearchable riches of His Grace. He can hold you and keep you poised and anchored in the peace and joy of the Lord. Do you believe that? Have you realised that? If you have you will not want to go warming yourselves by the world's fire. Your hearts will be, as Wesley puts it, "strangely warmed."

Some of you may have had that joy in days gone by. You have lost it somewhere on the highway of life and you will never be satisfied until you return to find it. Some of you have never had it. You just joined the Church. You were not converted. There was no change in your life and outlook. You do the same things that you did before. You are trying to

live a new life with an old heart. You cannot do that. Give up the attempt. Either get right with the Kingdom or get right out of it! But do not get out, get in! For within the Kingdom there is righteousness and peace and joy.

But, putting God first means a complete surrender to His will and service. It is saying, in truth, "All for Jesus," just as so many brave boys said, years ago now, "All for England"; "All for America"; "All for France"; "All for Belgium." They did not count the cost, neither must you. The British Government sent me during the war through the devastated areas of France, and one day I came into contact with a sergeant who had lost his arm. It had been blown off near Chateau Thierry. When the stretcher-bearers picked up this wounded man they found his arm had been blown off just below the elbow. When I met him I put my arm around him and said, "Sonny, I am sorry you lost your arm." "Mr. Smith," he said, "I did not lose my arm. I gave it gladly for my country. I only did what any man would do for the land he loves, and his dear ones in it." Would you do that for Jesus? That is the spirit which you must possess before you can enter the Kingdom.

What are the pleasures of the world worth? What does the gaining of a little money really amount to? How much better off is any man for a step-up in the social scale? Coffins are not lined with pockets for money! Dead men cannot smell the laurel-leaves of fame! Get right with God and you possess the promise of this life and of the life to come. To be right with God is something worth striving for; worth fight-

ing for. To have a clear conscience is a great possession. To have within your heart the hope of Heaven brings joy and "peace like a river!" There are no joys like those which Christ brings into the human heart. He saves you from the ugliness of sin. He fills you with the joy of His Salvation. He is worth knowing, is this Jesus. He is worth serving until the end. He sets before you a high standard in life and gives you grace to desire it and power to reach it. He fills your days with satisfaction and your nights with wonderful peace.

Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost! You can have all this if you are willing to pay the price. What is that price? It must be paid upon your knees, as befits poor sinners turning in penitence to a Holy God. You can never pay the purchase price any other way. You must climb down from your stilts. I saw a little fellow the other day with a broken arm and I said to him, "How did you get that, my boy?" "I was on stilts and fell off, sir," he replied. Some of you will have to get down from your stilts—not at the risk of a broken arm, but of a broken heart. You will have to pass through Gethsemane to reach your Easter Morning. Is this the kind of religion you are seeking? Is this the religion you want? Is this the Jesus you are willing to enthrone? Are you hungry and thirsty to enter the Kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit? Then, in the name of God, let me say to you, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they *shall* be filled."

VIII

SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

VIII

SEEDTIME AND HARVEST

TEXT: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: for he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting!"

Galatians. Chapter 6, Verses 7 and 8.

"Be not deceived." It is time that every man should prepare to face this fact; that God sees him and knows him through and through; knows the best and the worst about him and in him; that there is nothing hidden from the Judge of the earth and the Father of us all. Do not be deluded! Do not live in a fool's paradise! As to your own character, as to your private life and public life, as to your individual motives and desires, "be not deceived, God is not mocked." You may fool one another, you may fool your neighbours, you may fool the other members of your family; or your employer; but you cannot fool the All-wise God. There is an old-fashioned proverb to the effect that "Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise!" But where spiritual things are concerned, humanity's proverbs are not always true, or timely. There is danger in not knowing about, or caring about, the issues of life and death; the facts about heaven and hell; the opportunities of time and eternity. In all these respects, there is the utmost folly shown in

not knowing and facing things as they are. Abraham Lincoln once said, "You can fool *all* the people *some* of the time : you can fool *some* of the people *all* the time : but you cannot fool *all* of the people *all* of the time!" You cannot deceive God for a moment. God refuses to be bribed. God's eye cannot be closed. It may not be pleasant for you to know and think God knows you at your worst—but it is true! "Be not deceived : God is not mocked," for listen, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!"

My brother, the word "that" is as big as the "whatsoever." Indeed, it is a little bigger—for harvests are usually more abundant than the sown seed. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!" I may not reap it, he must reap it. Every man must bear his own responsibility; the burden of his own sin! Whatsoever he sows, that shall he reap. Men do not gather grapes of thorns; nor figs from thistles: men do not scatter barley and expect to grow wheat; they do not go forth and scatter turnip seed and expect a harvest of rye. Men look for kind—kind for kind. Men tell their sons that if they are studious, industrious, upright, and honest they will get on; that these virtues make for success and progress. That is true in the natural world: its truth is illustrated in a thousand different ways. The apostle appeals to this fundamental and mighty truth, and declares that what happens in the natural world also happens in the spiritual world. What we did yesterday affects us to-day! What we do to-day will affect us to-morrow! If God ceased to be, that law would continue to go on! It is unchangeable, immutable, that we should reap what we sow.

What shall the harvest be? My brother, let me tell you how you can answer that question. Look at what you are, settle what you are, know what you are doing. Pause in the rush and hurry, the fret and strain, of daily life and think of what you are; what you are doing; for what you are living. Say to yourself: "What am I? What am I doing? For what am I living? How do I stand in relation to my Bible and my God? What am I doing with the precious life God has given me?" My brother, you have yet to settle the question as to what the harvest of your life shall be. Do not be deceived; the question affects you—and all about you. Every man lives not unto himself, but also to others. We are living, not unto ourselves, but are scattering seed day by day, hour by hour, which will result in a harvest that is God-honouring, Christ-crowning, heaven-building, or that will be nothing but a crop of tangled thickets and poisonous weeds which must at length be gathered and rooted up at the cost of torn and bleeding hands and hearts. Many a man, through his own folly will be forced to reap an acreage of tangled thickets. At the end, at the harvest, it will be no use for him to look over this waste and say, "O God, I never meant all this. I never meant to grow briars and thistles!" Probably you did not, my brother, but if the sowing was your work you will also have to reap the harvest. You must reap whatsoever you sow!

Take your speech as an example. How can you expect to think pure thoughts, good thoughts, lofty thoughts, godly thoughts, and to work out these thoughts into words that will teach people of God and

of goodness when you read nothing but news from the Divorce Court, or glory in telling filthy stories—or in listening to them? How can you expect to speak purely, to live purely, when your thoughts are vile enough to make people think you have been to hell for your education, and have had the devil for your schoolmaster? How can you expect your children to use pure speech when they hear little else but oaths and curses from your lips? You are sowing evil seed in doing these things and don't forget that. I would rather be dumb than to use the power of speech to curse and swear and tell vile stories. How can you expect your children to grow up sober if you teach them to drink strong drink. If God were to lift a curtain before your eyes and let you look into the future, some of you might see, twenty years from now, a prison cell. In it you would see a poor, dejected, besotted criminal—and you would scarcely recognise him. His very look would horrify you. Vile of lip, bloody of cheek, sunken of eye, bestial in look and gesture, you would be appalled at the sight and cry out, "O God, what is that—who is he?" And God would answer, "That is the boy you sent for your dinner-beer on Sunday." You will reap whatsoever you sow!

Listen! On the other side of the ocean I knew of a home where the mother one day came suddenly into a room where her little boy of six or seven years of age was trying to kill a baby with a pair of scissors he held in his hand. "What are you doing?" she cried in horror as she ran to snatch the scissors from the boy. "I want to kill baby!" said the lad, quietly. This re-

mark so frightened the parents that they took the boy to a mental specialist—and that specialist was my friend. “Why do you want to kill the baby?” he said, after a thorough examination of the lad. “The little one does not harm you!” “I want to kill somebody all the time!” was the lad’s reply. Then the doctor turned to the father and said: “Are you a drinking man?” The father replied, “Well, I do drink, it is true, but not often to excess!” The Doctor said, “Well, but you do drink. That boy will kill somebody some day. It is in his blood and your drinking habit is the cause of it.” You reap whatsoever you sow—not only you, but others. Do not forget what you are you are passing on to the next generation. God Almighty will hold some responsible for bringing into the world murderers, thieves, violators of women, lunatics, imbeciles. Do not forget that. And how can you expect to keep your lives pure when you keep the company you do? How can you expect to keep pure if you live in the gutter of sin and iniquity? Listen to the voice of God’s Holy Spirit to-day. Stop your folly! Stop sowing wild oats! Stop committing moral suicide! You know where you have gone wrong. Some of you know already what the first downward step has cost you—whither it has led you. At first you never slept, thinking of the consequences of your folly—of your sin. Now you can do the same thing with impunity: you have become indifferent, careless, callous. That is how the law works. That is one of the natural effects of wrong-doing. Some of you may, perhaps, remember when God called you to a life of service, consecration and sacrifice. He

wanted you for Himself. You remember what a struggle it was for you to say "No!" Yes, but you did say "No!" That was the first step downward, wasn't it? You did the same thing more easily the next time, and still more easily the next. Now you are reaping some of the paralysis of the second death. "The way of the transgressors is hard." You reap whatsoever you sow!

My brother, when are *you* going to stop and give God a chance? Let me tell you another story. In the city of Manchester, England, I had a dear friend who lived for, and loved, the young men of that city. He was a well-to-do merchant who gave up much of his spare time to care for their moral and spiritual welfare. One day he sat in his office when the door opened and his son came in. "Father," said the young man, "there is a policeman here who wants to see you!" The merchant said, "Send him in, my son!" The officer entered. "Sir," he said, "there is a young man dying in a cell in the city prison and he is calling for you. Can you come?" The merchant went immediately, and in that prison cell found all that was left of a fine young fellow whom he had known well in earlier days. This boy had started life with great gifts and opportunities. He had made up his mind to go straight. He had gone to the city with his mother's prayers behind him, and his mother's Bible in his bag. For a few months he had done well, had played the man, but he had mixed himself up with a lot of young fellows who eventually made a wager that they would get him drunk. Let no man attempt to rob another of his religion or of his righteous character. "It

were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" than that he should offend in this manner. At length the young fellow gave way to his tempters. "They called me a milksop, and many other things," he said, "and taunted me that I was tied to my mother's apron strings!" Blessed tie that keeps a man to his God! Holy tie that tethers a man to the Cross, even though it be but a mother's apron string. "For a while I continued to struggle," said he, "then one day I went out to luncheon and took a glass of wine. The rest was easy; so easy. I soon began to drink heavily. I started to gamble, and then got heavily into debt. I must have been insane when one day I signed my master's name to a cheque and—well—here I am dying—and wanting to die. One thing alone troubles me. I do not want mother to know. If she knew I was in jail, that I deserved to be in jail, and was dying in jail, she would go mad!" But the merchant said, "She must be told! It is better that she should know!" So the mother was sent for. When she reached the jail, she said, "O God, why have I been spared to see this? What have I done that I should come to this? Why did I live when he was born? Why didn't I bury him as soon as he was born?" Heart-broken and faint, the mother would have fallen, but the merchant said to her, "You must be quick if you want to see your son before he passes away." But when she reached the prison cell it was too late, so she just knelt down beside the lifeless body and threw her arms around it and kissed it and said, "Oh, Willie, my Willie! I would to God that I had died for

thee!" But it was too late! The boy was reaping his own harvest. Mothers cannot stop the working out of this immutable law: fathers cannot stop it: God cannot stop it. You reap whatsoever you sow! Your only chance to gain forgiveness is to stand humbly at the foot of Calvary's Cross, where there is hope and healing for all.

IX

STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

IX

STRENGTH AND BEAUTY

TEXT: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion;
put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem."

Isaiah. Chapter 52, Verse 1.

These are the words of a reply from God to His ancient people, who are in a complaining mood as a result of their estrangement from Him. In an interval of returning sanity, they seem to wake up a little and to realise something of their weakness as well as of their sin. But they are not willing to bear the shame and punishment of their wrongdoing. They endeavour to shift the responsibility for their condition upon God. A little while before they had called out, "Arm of the Lord, awake! Put on Thy strength as in the ancient time." Do something for us, O God. And then, in querulous tones, they continue, "Is Thine ear heavy?" "Is Thine arm shortened?" What is the trouble, Thou God of Israel? Then God speaks to them in reply and said, Awake! Awake! My arm is not shortened: My ear is not heavy! It is you who are at fault. Then God explains to them the crux of the whole business. In effect, He says, Your sins are like a wedge. They have caused separation between us. If you want to experience the old sense of unity, you must remove the wedge. You must cast out your sin. Take out the thing which alienates you

from Me, and from My Power. You need not be weak and helpless. You may awake as a giant refreshed by sleep. You need not suffer defeat. You may become conquerors over every foe. You need not live in the lowlands of depression and failure; you may climb to hitherto unknown heights of exaltation and prosperity. You may walk with Me in spiritual high places. You may hold communion with the Infinite. "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion!"

Surely, there never was greater need for such an exhortation to the people of God than there is to-day. Where are our men of valour and might? Where are our strong men? Where are our giants in the service of Jesus Christ? Where are the men and women in the Church whose words are like the Pentecostal flame, whose lives are a benediction, and the touch of whose hands quivers with healing power? In every Church, almost, we find groups of so-called believers who can work up much enthusiasm and excitement over an entertainment, a social, or a lecture, but who dare not call their souls their own when there is need for a big sacrifice for Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for them. Why is there so much of this vapid, milk-and-water type of religion? Why are we so weak? What Delilah within the Church has been allowed to shear our locks and to rob us of our strength? What is it that we have allowed to come into our lives to sap our strength and power? What is it that makes us such conventional and ordinary Christians when God wants us to be unconventional and extraordinary, and to help Him to turn the world upside down, or right side up? The trouble with most of us is that it is difficult to

find out *what* we are, or *where* we are. We need a distinctive badge or decoration to show men and women what part of us belongs to Jesus, if any. Something is surely the matter. Where are the men and women of sterling Christian character? Where are the people of God? Where are the suppliants who know how to grip God's altar and to bring down fire from heaven upon their daily sacrifice? "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!"

We need to listen to such words to-day: "Put on thy strength, O Zion!" There is nothing weak or sentimental about such a summons; such a command. To be a Christian is to be the noblest thing in the world; the strongest thing, the most beautiful thing. The man who goes forth to live life as it ought to be lived, who is linked on to eternal things, who walks with God in daily companionship, will grow in grace, in strength, and in beauty until the angels envy his character. "Put on thy strength!" There are people who think it is weak to be a Christian. It is the strongest thing in the world, and when you try it you will quickly discover that human strength alone is absolutely futile.

I went to preach, some years ago, for Dr. Alexander McLaren, the prince of preachers. It was my privilege to be the only lay evangelist who ever conducted a service in his church. On my way to this particular service, I encountered five young fellows, about 21 years of age, seated by a lamp post. One man was showing off a ring on his little finger by continuously feeling his upper lip "for the substance of things hoped for." I stepped into the midst of the circle and said,

"Gipsy Smith is going to preach near here to-night. Won't you go to hear him?" One young fellow replied, "No! I never go to church!" I said, "How is that?" He said, "Well, only women go to church nowadays. They are the weak ones of the earth." I said, "Don't think that it is a sign of weakness to go to church. It is a sign of strength of character, and of superior judgment and outlook. You ought to thank God, my brother, that there is a woman in your house who loves God and prays for you, and who worships Him. It is no credit to you that you allow your women-folk to reveal all the religion that is in your home. Some day your children may say to you, 'Father, if you had been like mother, if you had been a Christian, my life would have been better, and happier too.' It is a manly, robust thing to follow Jesus Christ. 'Put on thy strength.' Pull with your full weight, man! Play the game! If you are to do that you must put off every weakness. You will have to discipline yourself; to deny yourself; to develop yourself. Pluck out everything that saps your manhood and palsies your spiritual achievement. 'Put on thy strength'."

It is a beautiful thing to be a Christian. It is not only a strong thing; a useful thing; but beautiful too. The other day I took a stroll round some golf links, intending to play. But I could hardly play because I could not take my eyes away from the beauty of nature all around me. You have only to open your eyes and look at a daisy to understand what I am going to say. God made the daisy beautiful. He put sufficient colours into the butterfly's wings to drive

your painters crazy. When I looked around that morning I saw the angels at work, mixing the colours, on the morning of life. When God makes things, He makes them very beautiful, very lovely! You must go to the woods, the woods where I was born, if you want to see beautiful things. All your beautiful things come from the woods—your pianos, your organs, your orchestral music, your harps, your houses, your tabernacles, and your churches. You get your cradles, and your coffins there too. And listen,

“When I survey the wondrous Cross
On which the Prince of Glory died”

I remember that if there had never been any woods there would never have been a Cross.

Look at the blue-bells! And when God sets the blue-bells ringing on a May morning in the woods, it is time to pray. Look at the primrose. I wish I could show you the English primroses by the millions in the woods on a Spring morning. And when God thinks an oak you have an oak. And when God thinks a daisy, you have a daisy. When God thinks a dewdrop, you have a dewdrop—that crystal palace that holds the angels; a fit place for Deity, so pure, so beautiful it is. When God thinks a violet, you have a violet. Could it be anything else? God has His way in the woods. How is it that He does not have His way with you and me? He wants your life to be as beautiful as the flowers on a May morning. He wants your heart to be as full of music as the woods. My brethren, how is it that we have not reached His standard for us? Why have we

not risen to the opportunity of our high calling? You are not enough like the King. "Put on thy beautiful garments." Why are you so shabby spiritually—so down-at-the-heel in your moral outlook—when the Father's wardrobe is full? Why do people not say of our spiritual progress:

"But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."

Why do you walk like an old religious tramp? Why don't you wear the beautiful garments: "the panoply of God." Put them on! Wear them always! Be like Jesus! And if you are like Him you will not need a banner or a badge to let people know you are a Christian. You will not need to label yourself a Methodist, a Baptist, a Congregationalist, or an Episcopalian. You need not tell any one what you are. If Jesus is within, He will make His presence known. Your eyes will reflect the beauty of His holiness. They will shine like stars of the morning.

I wonder if you have ever heard of Billy Bray? He was a layman, not an ordained preacher, but a Cornish miner, and he helped to build more chapels than any dozen preachers of his day and generation. Billy Bray worked in the mines, and then he preached until his wages were exhausted, and then went back to work for more, and then went preaching again. And he brought thousands to God. I once stayed with a dear old couple who knew Billy Bray and they told me this story about him. His clothes were getting very shabby at one period, and he had no

money to buy more. Everybody who knew him thought he wore "beautiful garments," because they loved him. He was a poem, a sonnet, dedicated to His Lord. One day when he was preaching in Cornwall a strange lady, a widow, saw and heard him. She remembered that she possessed a wardrobe full of her late husband's clothes, and at the close of the service she said, "Billy, I should like to give you a suit of clothes, yours are shabby!" "Yes," replied Billy. "They are because I have worn them out." "I should like you to have them," said the lady doubtfully, "but I am not certain they would fit you." "Did the Lord tell you to offer them to me?" asked Billy. "I am sure He did," the lady replied. "Then I am sure they will fit, because He knows my measure exactly," was Billy's prompt reply. And when God says to you, "Put on thy beautiful garments," everything will surely fit. He knows!

I want to ask Christian people a question. How is it that we are not as good as we might be? How is it that our homes are not such altars of the Most High as He meant them to be? How is it that the harmony which ought to exist in every Christian home is spoiled so often by false notes and discords? Nothing alienates people from Christ more than cross purposes in the home-life. How is it that in these respects we are so unlike Jesus?

I was staying in a beautiful home some time ago; I was there with the hope of winning my host, the husband and father, for Jesus Christ. The hostess was a fine woman, a church worker and member. I had been there a week when one morning I came down to break-

fast and realised immediately that something had gone wrong. The children did not run to greet me as they had done on other mornings. I did not see the husband until the breakfast-gong had sounded, and when the family were seated, they remained silent. The hostess barely looked at me when she said, "Blessing, please!" The husband ate his meal in silence. So did I! The children were in tears, and when they got up, went off to school without kissing father and mother "good-bye." I went to my room and stayed there until eleven o'clock. Then there was a knock at my door. I knew that it was the lady who wished to speak to me. I said, "Come in!" She said, "I am very sorry for what happened this morning!" I said, "You ought to be!" Then I continued, "You know this is Friday morning. I had hoped that I had reached your husband. He did seem to be interested and I thought I had got hold of him, but you have spoiled the whole thing this morning!" She replied, "But I did not say anything to him." "No!" I said, "but you looked a great deal." She burst into tears and said, "That has been my life-long failing—my inability to control my temper. I have prayed and fought against this besetment, but every now and again it gets the mastery over me." I said, "Sister, you need to let the Lord Jesus come into your heart and reign there. He will master your evil temper for you! Put on your beautiful garments! Become like the Lord Jesus. Then you will win your loved ones for Him by the beauty of your character and the humility of your life. God wants you to be as sweet as the flowers in Spring; as fragrant as the clover in June; as glorious as a rose bedecked

with morning dew. Your beautiful garments will be 'winsome'—and you will win those you love for Him to love too."

I should like to speak to you about many other things you will have to put on, but let me say this: "Suppose every one of you were to put on here and now a determination that he would lovingly and tenderly speak to a friend or neighbour about Jesus." That we would find some one who does not know God, and bring them into contact with Him. Would not that be lovely? There are more people ready for that message than you realise. There are more people who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness than you suppose. There are more people disappointed with you and me that we have not delivered that message than you imagine. You and I must study God afresh—get into closer contact with Jesus Christ—get to know the mind and will of the Master, so that we can interpret Him aright to those who need His salvation, His power, and His love. All about you there are people longing for sympathy, love, some word about Jesus. Put on your beautiful garments—become like Him—then go forth in His name to speak the word that brings pardon, peace, comfort, strength, and life, to sin-sick souls. You may have to fight hard to accomplish this task, but some day you may come to Him as a conqueror, with the marks of the fight still upon you. "Bring forth the best robe and put it upon him." I sometimes wonder what the best robe is; what it stands for; what it means. I want to be ready to wear it. God help us all to get a robe! Only those whose hearts are right with God, who have turned their backs upon

sin, who have left the swine-troughs and the far country, and have returned to their Father's house, can have a robe. I wonder if you have done all this—if you will do it now! I know what my Lord would like to see. He would like to see all of you in your beautiful garments. "Put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!" The King is coming this way. Let us all be ready to greet him!

X

JESUS AND THE PEOPLE

X

JESUS AND THE PEOPLE

TEXT: "After these things there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue *Bethesda*, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water."

St. John. Chapter 5, Verses 1, 2 and 3.

This is a wonderful story. I want you to remember that Jesus had been up to Jerusalem before. This was not His first visit. "Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool." Why connect that pool with Jesus?

Jesus had been heard and seen. His words had attracted attention. The people had spoken of Him to their friends and neighbours, spoken of His mysterious personality, His new and wonderful gospel. When I remember this, and think about the story, one question immediately arises in my mind. *Why did not the people of the city interest themselves a little in this pool, and in the people around it?* Surely they knew something of the suffering, the pain, and the mental agony of the people waiting to be healed. Surely they knew something of this everyday tragedy of withered bodies and broken lives. Surely the people who lived in the city, the religious people, the people who went up to the Temple regularly

to worship, the people who held responsible positions in the city; surely they knew something of the hopes and heartaches associated with the pool? They had seen the pool, it was a public place; they knew all about it. Why, then, did they not concern themselves with this conglomeration of human suffering and need? Surely the people of the city did know something about these broken bodies, and weary limbs, and weeping eyes! If they did not, they ought to have known; and not to know was cruelty, and not to care was worse. To take no steps towards alleviating that mass of suffering and drying its tears was diabolical. Surely these people knew what was going on day by day at the pool called Bethesda.

Listen! Why did not these people in high places, these religious leaders of the people, why did they not go to Jesus and say: "Here, Nazarene, *we* have no use for you, no belief in you; but go down to the pool. We can show you something which will keep you busy. Come with us down to the pool! There are people there, blind people, lame people, withered people, waiting for a healer, waiting for somebody to give them a chance; to bring them hope. Come with us and see what you can do with them, and for them. That would seem a reasonable proposition; a reasonable test of Christ's power; a reasonable exhibition of their own sympathy in the sorrows and sufferings of their fellows. Why didn't these people in Jerusalem feel enough, and care enough, to do a thing like that? It was for the same reason that many Christian people have not been to a prayer meeting lately; for the same reason that many religious

people have not gone down on their knees lately to pray for the people around the pools in their own town or city; for the sick, blind, halt and withered folk all around them. There are "pools of Bethesda" everywhere and if we do not know *where* they are it is because we do not *want* to know; because we have not taken the trouble to find out; because we have been so pre-occupied about other things that we have neglected the King's business. If we have not heard sighs and sobs to-day which rent the heart; seen sights to-day that brought tears unbidden to our eyes; heard something to-day that racks our brain and robs us of our smug contentment and self-satisfaction and teaches us to think more of Christ and His lost ones, it is just because we have not taken the time or the trouble to pray, or think, or understand, or to learn the genius of the Cross and the heart of Christ's gospel.

The fact is, we do not know *how* to pray. We do not really understand what Prayer is. We say a few prayers, and God calls them "much speaking." We touch the door of mercy with kid gloves, and then only with the tips of our gloved fingers. If we could only realise what sin is; and what the great, throbbing, pulsating power of the gospel of Jesus Christ can do for the sinner, we should pelt heaven with our prayers for the sufferers on the fringe of Bethesda. We should get on our knees and refuse to get up until every suffering, sin-stricken man or woman had been healed and saved by Jesus. We do not know how to pray yet. If I came to your house, could you show me the place where you kneel regularly for family prayer? Family

prayer is beginning to be a lost art. If I asked you to bring the Bible you use regularly for family worship could you do it? How often do you take your child aside and pray with him—or her? You say, “Oh! I pray for him, for her!” Do you pray with your child? Do you pray with your maid? Have you religion enough to do that? Your maid has a soul; she is not a chattel. Do you expect to see your friends and neighbours, your husband, your wife, your children converted if you do not pray? Do you talk to them about the things of God? Are you concerned, interested, infatuated with the business of bringing them to Christ? Are you so grieved when you see people godless and prayerless that you are compelled to speak to them about the things which really matter; about death and judgment and Eternal Life? That is the spirit of the New Testament, of Calvary, of Pentecost; and it is the spirit of the Epistles. It is that spirit which you and I have to get if we are to do anything for Christ in our own city or town. We must live in the spirit of prayer; desire to pray; love to pray—that humanity may be healed. The weak spot in our religious life to-day is the lack of power to pray. We can fill our Church parlours and lecture halls for a dramatic entertainment, a concert, or a recital—but not often for a prayer meeting. Is this not so? Yet the weak spot in our religious life should be our chief source of strength. The Church of God was born in the atmosphere of prayer. The Church which loses the power to pray has no right to call herself a Church of God. Do you love the place of prayer? Why did not these people go to Jesus and say: “Come, Jesus, down to the

pool." Why did not some of the friends of the sufferers go to Him? Why were they not concerned? Simply because they were indifferent; and it is this spirit of indifference which is paralysing the power of the gospel in many places to-day. Just as soon as professing Christians realise the need for prayer, the privilege of prayer, and the power of prayer, just so soon will the healing—the revival of life and energy—come in overwhelming, irresistible, strength-giving force. Lord, teach us how to pray.

In the midst of a series of evangelistic meetings, a woman who had been a nominal Christian, a nominal Church member, was tremendously converted. She was not a Christian, because there is sometimes a big difference between a Church member and a Christian. You are not a Christian if you are a Church member only. You are not a Christian unless you are Christ's man or woman; unless you have been born again; unless sin in your life has been given up. You have no right to that holy title of Christian until you are Christ's. Then you will not need a label. When you are born again everybody will know it. If you and I could visit together some of our lovely English vales in the early springtime of the year, when the skylarks and the linnets, the thrushes and the finches sing the songs of the angels "wrapped in feathers;" when the flowers are in bloom and everywhere the landscape looks as if God had broken up a rainbow into fragments and scattered them at our feet, what would you think of me if I stood in the midst of all this transcendent beauty with a paint-brush, attempting to paint the lilies and the roses, and saying to you as I did so

"This is Spring." When God's Spring comes into the human soul there is no need of a paint-brush to depict its glory. Everybody knows about it. We need a paint-brush when the Spring is not there; when the glow and colour and beauty is absent; and that is why some people are so particular in saying, "I am a Christian!" If they were Christians, there would be no need for them to talk about it. We should see it in their every thought and word and deed. The light of God would shine in their lives, like the dawn that breaks over the cliff-tops of Eternity. Oh, God, let that light arise and shine now!

This woman, then, had been a nominal Christian. And the word "nominal" in the dictionary means "un-real." This woman was converted one Sunday night. She was the mother of six boys, and on Monday night she brought one of them to the meeting; on Tuesday another; and on Wednesday another; on Thursday she brought two; and on Friday she brought a motherless youth, a lad of 17, who lived near by. On Saturday night there was a testimony Meeting; and I saw her get up, and heard her speak. Her face was a revelation of the glorious light within. She said, "God has done great things for me this week. He saved me last Sunday, and there and then I started to pray for my boys and husband. He has saved five of my boys—and this motherless youth. To-morrow, my husband will be saved. He is a blasphemer. He does not know I have been praying for him. He and my first-born will be converted to-morrow. God is going to give them to me—both." I cannot describe the thrill that passed through the audience when that

woman, with a faith so triumphant, made that statement. I said, "Let us pray;" and closed the meeting with prayer. The next morning the husband, who was a signalman on the railway, and had been working all night, left his signal-box at six o'clock and went home. "Let me have some breakfast as soon as you can," he said to his wife. "I want what little sleep I can get this morning, for I am going to hear that man, Gipsy Smith, both afternoon and night." His wife replied, "Yes: that is right. We have been praying for you." "For me?" said the husband. "Yes," was the quiet reply, "God saved me last Sunday, and five of the children have been brought into the Kingdom during the week, so we have been praying together for you." "For me?" the man repeated once again. "Yes," said his wife, "Gipsy Smith prayed for you last night and all present in the Church said, 'Amen.' " "What time was that?" said the husband. "About half-past eight," replied the wife. For a moment the man said nothing, but a look of intense wonderment came into his eyes. Then he said slowly, "That is strange. At half-past eight the line was clear. I had nothing to do for a while but to sit and think. I thought of you, and of the children, and of the wicked life I had lived, and something—some one—said, 'You ought to be a Christian, for your wife's sake, and for your children's sake, and for your own sake.' It was then," continued the husband, "that I threw myself on the cabin floor and prayed to the God of my mother for peace and mercy." That woman's faith gripped her husband and gripped God, and brought them together; and the husband is a successful local

preacher in my own Wesleyan Methodist Church to-day.

But why did the sufferers at the pool of Bethesda not come to Jesus? They were blind and could not see; they were deaf and could not hear, they were lame and could not walk. So, when Jesus said to one man, "Wilt thou be made whole?" the sufferer put the whole case for himself and the others into a nutshell, and said, "Sir, I have no man . . . to put me into the pool." There was the trouble! To-day, in every large city and town, thousands are saying the same thing.

We are church-goers—but are we spiritual? We are religious—but are we soul-winners? We bear the name of Christ—but have we His Spirit? We take the Cup of Communion with Him—but are we sharing His Cross? Are we beneath the weight of a withered world, helping to lift sinful humanity a little nearer to God? That is the Christ spirit! Have we got that? The Christ spirit concerns itself with the suffering, the sorrowing, the dying, the blind, the sick, the lame, the lost, and seeks to bring them all back to the healing hand and Father-heart of God. Are you doing that? You know—and God knows.

Now let me turn the picture round for a moment. Are there not these three classes in every church—the blind, the halt, and the withered? I find them everywhere, and especially in churches. People who do not see, and, what is more, do not want to see; do not want to be disturbed; to be interrupted. They would rather you cried, "Peace!" They are blinded by the god of this world. Are you one of them?

Are you conscious of your need? Do you feel your desperate condition? Do you see your sin? Do you see it in the light of Christ's Cross—for that is how God sees it. He sees sin from Bethlehem to Golgotha. That is the measure of your sin—and mine. Do you see sin as God sees it, in all its blackness, hideousness; its damning, paralysing power? We shall never understand the height of Calvary until we sound the depths of our own sin. When we get a clear vision of our own sin we still cry out for a Saviour. I think, if we felt our sin as God sees our need for salvation, we should fall on our knees and forget about everything and everybody and cry out, "Oh! God, save me or I die!" Nobody needs to pray that prayer more than I do. "Save me or I die!" Are we blind? Remember that we *may* see!

Then there are people in the Church who are lame; people who are sometimes up and sometimes down; people you are never sure of; sometimes they are within sight of victory; and then within the shadow of defeat. They are lame. They always want a spiritual hospital. Is that your case? Are you spiritually maimed? And then there are the withered; who are they? A withered arm is bad enough; but a withered soul! Can you imagine *that*? Useless, lifeless, drooping, hanging, a burden, a weariness—dead, twice dead—a backslider! There are two types of backsliders; the public-backslider and the heart-backslider. The heart-backslider keeps his position in the Church but he is the more dangerous, and a greater hindrance to the Church than the public-backslider. You know how to treat the latter man or

woman. It is the man in the pew, who has forsaken God, who is the menace to the Church of God. Come out of your hiding-place and get right again with God.

The blind, the halt, the withered; here they are—all about us. If you get them to face the fact of their condition they might say, "Oh! yes, but it will be all right some day. We are waiting for the moving of the waters!" Perhaps they are waiting for a revival that will sweep them into the healing pool. Let them get on their knees and the revival will begin. The waters of Salvation are moving; they have been moving ever since Jesus died. The waters of life and of healing, the rivers of grace and of life eternal, are at our feet within our reach, and we may step in, and God's tide, if we will let it, will lift us out of our sin to God. The Lord help you to step in now. Some of you have been sitting on the edge of the pool so long that our hearts move us to give you a push and have you in, but we cannot do it. When the waters were troubled it was the one who stepped in that was made whole; and when Jesus came to this scene of human misery, He said to the man who was healed, "Arise"—and he had to get up. Your salvation depends upon your obedience to this Divine command. While you wait you can never be saved. Inactive, you will never know victory. Sit still, and never take the step toward God, and you will never realise His forgiveness, His healing power, His mercy, and His love. You may wait until Doomsday and never be healed. You get healed by movement, obedience, repentance, surrender, confession. God help us all to get a little nearer now

to the moving stream, the healing waters, the cleansing fountain "opened for us on Calvary's hill."

Brother, where are you? Sister, do you know the Saviour? He is very near to you at this moment.

"Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands or feet."

Close your eyes and speak to Him of your great need. Say to Him, "Lord Jesus, make me whole. I want to be whole. Heal my poor, withered, maimed life; my broken heart; my weakness; my sin. Lord, Thou knowest all about me. Thou art the Saviour of men, and my Saviour. Save me now." If that prayer comes from your heart, the good Lord will answer it quicker than it takes me to tell you about it. The Lord help you to put Him to the test at this moment. This is the place of healing for sin-sick souls; there is—here and now—a moving of the waters—the pool of Bethesda. May you step in and come forth healed in spirit, purified in heart, strengthened in soul, and with a beauty born of that holiness which is the gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

XI

CHRIST IN THE HOME!

XI

CHRIST IN THE HOME!

TEXT: "And she being instructed of her mother."

St. Matthew. Chapter 14, Verse 8.

X The Mother makes the home! What the mothers of the nation are to-day, the children very largely will be to-morrow. The mothers of our race are moulding the life of the race, and the character of the race. The prosperity and progress of the world of to-morrow depends upon the mothers of to-day.

I saw this in France, in the blood and mud of the trenches. I saw it in the hospitals, where the broken, bruised and torn bodies of men were healed and restored. I heard it from the lips of the dying. It makes all the difference in such circumstances if a boy can recall the memory of a good mother. And in other walks of life, whether a girl has a good mother or a bad one. I will tell you something from a man's standpoint. A man never gets over the disaster of a bad mother. He never gets away from the benediction of a good one. If a boy grows up without a mother's loving care, life is never the same to him! I am going to tell you a heart secret. My mother left me when I was but six years of age. I have never known a mother's love and my heart has been starved for the want of it. I think my character and my life would have been richer and fuller—my influence and work in the world greater—if I had but known the sweetness

of a mother's love, listened to the music of a mother's prayer, and been sheltered by a mother's arms when I was a child. If I had a Christian mother to-day I should always want her near, always want her inspiration and help, always preach for her my best sermons, always reveal to her the secrets I could never share with anybody else. It makes all the difference to a boy, even when he has grown up and has reached manhood, if his mother is a godly woman and not a worldly woman; if she is a Christ-like woman and not a Christless woman; if she thinks more of the soul of her child than she does about keeping her fingers in order, or about the style of her next hat. God help the child of a bad mother. God help a little baby if its mother thinks more of a dance, or a bridge party, or a social function of any kind, than she does of caring for the little one; if she gives the baby something to send it off to sleep whilst she goes off to play the fool or accompany the devil. God have mercy on the child of such a mother.

A lady, one of the aristocracy of France, once sat by the side of the Emperor, Napoleon, at a great dinner. "My Emperor, will you tell me what it is France needs most at this present hour?" she said. The great Napoleon turned to the lady and said, quietly, "France needs most of all mothers." And if you ask me what Britain, America, Australia, or any other country in the world needs most of all to-day, my reply would be the same—"Just mothers—good mothers, godly mothers!" If we preachers could win the motherhood of the world for Christ, the world would be His Kingdom, within a very short time.

Many young people are saying to-day, "It would be much easier for me to be a Christian if my mother was a Christian. Of course, she goes to church. But that is about all there is in her religion. I can get no help from her for my spiritual nature; no food for my spiritual life and growth!" You can imagine how different it is for the young man or woman who desires to follow Christ, if the home-life is worldly, if God is left out of the family's programme, if Christ is not the Head of the house and the chief Guest at the table, if spiritual things are not given their rightful place. In such a home, to be a disciple, is doubly hard, it is not "the thing," not fashionable, and so the young convert dislikes to be considered eccentric and peculiar, and just goes with the stream—drifts further and further away from Jesus, the source of all strength and joy.

What hope is there for children in such an atmosphere? You mothers have to take your stand for God and for Truth in the home, take your stand for Jesus Christ against all the forces that would cause your boys and girls to drift and sink. I have seen little children in some homes follow the example of their parents and take up the morning newspaper and look first of all for the news from the Divorce Court. Why? Because in such homes the sanctity of the marriage-tie has been degraded, and the moral standard has been lowered, so that even the children revel in the stories of wrong-doing and shame. In upholding the sanctities of the home, of marriage, of womanhood, the mother holds the key to the position. If women are true to themselves, their homes,

their sisters, men would be compelled to live purer and happier lives. If every woman in Britain and in America was to take her stand for Jesus the Divorce Courts of both countries would have to be closed up. You know this is true! You know it!

What kind of impression does your home-life give to your children? You cannot teach them what you do not know! You cannot give them what you do not possess! If you have an empty cupboard you cannot provide food for your child. If you, yourself, are not right with God, you cannot influence your child Godward. It is essentially true that "The hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world!" And I covet for my Lord the magnificent personality, the mighty power, the wonderful influence of the Motherhood of our land. He is worthy of it all. He wants you Mothers. He wants you to help His cause! He wants you to win the world for Him; for righteousness, for purity, for peace. How often have boys come to me and said, "Sir, I was just pushed out into the world!" This was the language of one boy in France. He was dying and I was trying to help him to pray. "Sonny," I said, "don't you know one little prayer?" "No, sir," he whispered, "I was pushed out into the world without any prayer; my mother never taught me to pray!" God help any boy or girl who has to make that confession. Some people never wake up to the importance of godliness in the home until their boys and girls have gone to the devil. Then they discover it was they who helped to send them there. It is not easy to sing, "Where is my wandering boy to-night" when you realise that he is in the far country, eating out his

heart in the swine-trough, and you did nothing to hinder him from getting there. You were frivolous! You were godless! You were in the world when you ought to have been in the Church. You missed your opportunity to mould and fashion your child in the likeness of Christ Jesus, when his character was in a plastic and formative state; when you had a chance to fashion him according to the mind of the Master.

X Mothers, it is a solemn thing to realise that you, perhaps above everybody else, will be held responsible at the bar of God for the fate, the destiny, of your children. Make no mistake about that—it is so! Some mothers bemoan the fact that their children are gamblers. What about you? I was recently in a city where in one of the homes the only son came down to breakfast one morning with a bundle of American dollar notes in his hands. “What have you got there?” queried his mother. “Two hundred and fifty dollars won at cards last night,” was the reply. The mother was shocked and horrified. “My boy a gambler,” she said at length. “Yes!” he said. “But do you know your mother is a leading member and an official in the Church?” she asked. “Yes, I know that!” he admitted. “Then you must take that money and restore it to the loser!” she demanded, with tears in her eyes. “Mother,” he said, suddenly (pointing to an article on the sideboard), “where did you get that?” “I won it at a Whist Drive,” said the distracted woman. “Won it at a Whist Drive!” repeated the son. “Well, if you will send that back, I will restore the money I won. You taught me to play cards in this house. You played for that prize. I’ve gone just a little further,

and have played for money. But it was my mother who taught me to play and gave me the desire."

It is home instruction that determines what your boys and girls will be. The devil will try to get at your child soon enough. Guard him as long as you possibly can. Lead him to Christ. Teach him to look to Christ. Your success in this direction will depend upon your own character, your own communion, your own standing before God, and your example and teaching to those who call you by the sacred name of "Mother."

Have you ever thought of this—that it is possible for your children to rise up and curse you instead of "calling you blessed?" Sin will make all the difference in their attitude toward you in the home—and toward goodness—and God. I am not telling you what to give up—that is not my business. Somebody said to me the other day, naming a habit, "Is this a sin!" I said, "I dare not say so!" There are commandments in the Bible, and it takes me all my time to keep them. Why do you ask me that question? If the habit is a doubtful one—if the doing of it rests upon your conscience—take the question to Christ and in the light of His purity and holiness, decide the matter once and for all. Anything that comes between you and God is wrong, no matter what it is. If it comes between you and God, it must go. In the light of that statement, you can settle your whole life. God said, "Thou shalt have none other gods before Me." He must have the place of the throne in your heart and in your home. He will not share your devotion with another. He is a jealous God. He gave you everything in life worth

having and He demands from you your best in return. Nothing else will satisfy Him. He demands a whole surrender. Mothers, you will be more likely to win your children for God and good if you are right yourselves. Wives, you will have a better chance of leading your husbands Heavenward if you know and follow the path Christ trod. Many a wife stands in the way of her husband's salvation, just as many a man keeps his wife from doing the will of God. Many a woman would win her husband for Christ, if she was an out-and-out Christian in the home. I know that discipleship needs courage and moral backbone. It means taking up your cross. It means becoming patient and gentle and tender and loving because that is the royal road to victory over self and over moral weakness and sin. Mothers, for the sake of your babies, your boys and girls, your position and influence in the home, the city and the Church, let Jesus Christ fill your life. Be wholly consecrated to His service. Tell Him that He shall have one life true to Him, that your time, your talents, your mind, body and soul, shall be His. Tell Him that—and now!

Stand by that promise! Whatever happens, stand by it. If you will do that, you will win out, for faithfulness and loyal devotion will have its abundant reward. I do not care how difficult your task may be, or how hard your life may be, if you are true to Jesus Christ, you will win a great reward, and win those you love.

Believe me, it is the home life that tells. It is the influence of home that leads boys and girls, youths and maidens, to decide for Christ. The home is the

sanctuary of the soul as well as of the body. Nothing should be allowed to enter into it that defileth, or maketh a lie. Mothers and wives and maidens, give yourselves to God. Let Him protect and guide you. The only way to go through life safely is to go through it with God. One of the most beautiful words in the English language is that little word "Home!" One of the noblest professions in the world is that of a "Home-maker!" I once heard of a wealthy man—an English aristocrat—who declared on oath before a court of Justice that he possessed fourteen houses—but had not one "home." It is possible for a mansion to be but a lodging-house. It often happens that a cottage is a finer "home!" A real home is where love is, where peace is, where joy is, where God is. A home without Christ in it is like a grate without a fire in it on a cold day. A mother who does not know Jesus does not know the secret of "home-making"—of building up a happy home.

Mothers, wives, for the sake of your children, your husband, your city, your nation, your Church, see to it that Christ is the corner stone of your house, that His altar is on your threshold, that His service is your delight. Then you will raise up sons and daughters who will live to bless you. And in the day of many surprises, when you have left this earthly home for one of the many mansions, you will find them there—safe, happy, restored, united, with not one absent. You will not live in an empty house, but in a mansion of God's providing, peopled with those you love and who love you. That is what will make it Heaven! May that Heaven be yours some day.

XII

PAUL TEACHING IN THE INQUIRY ROOM

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PAUL TEACHING IN THE INQUIRY ROOM

TEXT: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Acts. Chapter 16, Verses 30-31.

Let us commence by supposing that Paul is the preacher at this moment. Let us imagine that some one is standing up and is saying, "Paul, I am an anxious enquirer, what must *I* do to be saved?" Let us suppose that, encouraged and inspired by that question, another person rises, and says, "Paul, my heart is broken and burdened with sin, and I want to be a better man, what must *I* do to be saved?"; that another says, "Well, Paul, my life is not what it ought to be. I know I am not living as God wants me to live. What must *I* do to be saved? And still another says, "Paul, I have had a chequered career and I would not like to say how my life has been lived. God knows, and I know. What must *I* do to become a Christian? What must *I* do to be saved?" How do you think Paul would answer these several questions? What do you think he would say? Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, people will suggest that Paul would say to these enquirers exactly what he said to the Philippian jailer. That is where we make a mistake. Paul would only say the same thing when the conditions were identical. This text has become a great classic by being used together with John 3. 5, 16. We have

hurled these two verses at everybody, regardless of their moral condition or of how their lives have been spent. We have hurled them at men and women irrespective of their mental or moral attitude to Jesus Christ. We have said, "Believe! Believe!! Believe!!!" The devil believes, and yet he is not a saint! He believes far more than you and I do! He knows more about the truth of the gospel!

What would you and I think of a doctor who went through a ward in a hospital where, say, twenty sick people were lying, all afflicted with various ailments and pains, with different diseases; and then wrote out one common prescription for all. I submit his action would be as much according to common-sense as ours is when we try to save men and women "en bloc." It is there we so often blunder. People are not saved in multitudes, but as individuals. God's plan is to diagnose each case, to study individual difficulties, to get to the root of the trouble in every human heart, and then to tear it out. That is God's plan. That was also Paul's method. That has been the method of all successful soul-winners. If you read the chapter from which the text is taken, read it carefully, you will see that is just what Paul did. He said to this man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Then he took him and taught him—taught him what? "The word of the Lord!" He made him realise what "believing" meant. Paul did not deal out superficial truths to this Philippian jailer. Why, then, did Paul say to this *man*, "Believe"? Because he was an atheist; an infidel. To him, Jesus Christ was a rank impostor. He did not believe in Jesus. Jesus

had been put to death; and these men, these prisoners of his; these followers of the crucified Nazarene; they must be put out of the way. His orders were to put them into prison; and he did a "bit on his own"; he put them into the *inner prison* and made them fast in the stocks and "laid many stripes upon them." He was a sceptic, an unbeliever; but when the light flashed upon his mind and conscience, and he saw the danger to his own soul, in that moment he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Then Paul said, "The only thing you can do is to enthrone Jesus, to believe on Jesus. He has been an Ambassador to you from God; now believe on Him. Unbelief is your predominating sin; your damning sin. Let that sin go, and other sins will slink away with it like a company of whipped and beaten curs. Put Christ in His right place. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ!" Paul said that to this man because that was his sin—the sin of Unbelief.

Look back in the same chapter, and there you will find another such case. Here the enquirer is a woman, not a man, and you will see that Paul dealt very differently with this woman because her case was different. There was a woman who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying, and she followed Paul and Silas, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of Salvation." Listen to that testimony. If that woman had lived in our time, the leaders in the Church would have put her on a Missionary Committee. I am not sure they would not have attempted to make a missionary of her. At any

rate, they would have made her a member of the Church, and a Sunday School teacher, right off. They might have even made her a minister. "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of Salvation." Isn't that magnificent? Paul, why don't you make a preacher of such a disciple as that? "No," says Paul, "that is not my way of dealing with this woman. The devil can preach, but I refuse to accept the devil's gospel. She has got the devil in her; a lying devil; a soothsaying devil." But Paul might have said to the woman, "If you will believe, you shall be saved." Why did he not say something like that? Because the woman did believe, and said so. She had faith of a kind, but it was not saving faith. There is a faith which saves and there is a faith which damns, and Paul realised that the only thing to say to this woman and to the devil which was in her was "Come out! Come out!" And Paul said it! That was a very different method of dealing with a possible convert from the other. You see Paul was a winner of souls. He studied his patient. He did not write his prescription before he made his diagnosis. Paul put his finger on his patient's pulse and discovered her condition. He took time to think and to consider how best to deal with the ailment and when he was sure about the matter, he said to the devil which possessed her, "Come out!"

There is another verse in the same chapter which tells of the conversion of another woman, a very different type of woman. If you had known Lydia, you would have fallen in love with her, she was so beautiful, so attractive, in mind and character. If you

ministers could get a woman in your church like Lydia, she would be about the most popular person in your congregation. There would never be rows or jealousies where Lydia was. There would be no bickerings or quarrellings at the fancy fairs or Church socials where Lydia took part. Lydia—why, Lydia went to a week-night prayer meeting! She was religious. She lived up to the light she had. She was moral, pure, lovable. But Lydia lacked Christ. With all her morality, her social position, her religious prestige, and her outstanding intellectual attainments, Lydia lacked the one thing needed—lacked Christ. One day, as usual, she went down to that little place by the river-side where prayer was wont to be made and there she found Paul and Silas, who began to speak and to pray. There, before she knew exactly what had happened, or how it happened, her heart was touched and her soul and life were at that moment surrendered to Jesus. All her preconceived notions of the past had to be given up and forgotten. All her thoughts upon morality; all her self-righteousness forsaken and put away. She yielded her life to the Christ Who had died for her, and Who rose again and her heart was filled with His dear presence.

The man in this gospel story, then, has to give up the devil of infidelity before he can be saved, a woman has to give up the devil of soothsaying and lying; and another woman has to give up the devil of respectability and religiosity. In the hearts of all three, Jesus Christ must be enthroned and obeyed. Paul deals with each case on its own merit, taught by the Holy Spirit and the living, unchanging Word of

God, and as a result, all three persons are brought into an experience of joy and salvation and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Friends, if you are anxious to know what you must do to be saved, listen! Paul would say to you, "Is your question honest?" If you said, "Yes!" he would say, "Tell me, then, what is your sin? What has kept you from Christ all these years?" One man might reply, "Paul, if you must know, it is my love for strong drink." Then Paul would say, "The devil of drink must come out of you. You must believe, here and now, that Christ can cast that devil out. You must trust Jesus with your life, and you will be saved." Another man might say, "Paul, if I must confess, my sin has been that of avarice. I am a gambler!" And Paul would reply, "Then give it up, and believe!" If a third was to say, "My sin is Uncleaness," then Paul would say that "Uncleaness must be rooted out." It is no use to talk about "believing" until sin is surrendered. And if you say, "My sin is pride. I cannot surrender!" Paul would say, "But that devil must go too, for faith without works is dead!"

The truth is, we have preached a cheap religion far too long. We have cheapened Calvary in our thoughts, but it has never become cheapened with God. We have preached love until the people are love-sick. Salvation did not begin so much in the love of God, as it did in the holiness of God. I want to make this truth very plain, very emphatic. It is good theology. Salvation comes from the Holy Father, Who hates sin, but Who loves you. He hates your sin, but He loves

you. He gave His Son to make it possible for you to be saved. Your faith is a mockery if you still cherish your sin. Your faith is false if it does not mean absolute surrender. Let me prove my statement. Paul and Silas took this man about whom we have been reading, and they taught him the Word of the Lord. What happened? Did he sit there and sing:

“I will believe: I do believe”?

No! he had something more definite, more practical, more religious, more godly, to do. He got up and—at the same hour of the night, he could not wait until the morning—“washed their stripes.” That is religion—real religion! The proof of that man’s belief—his faith, was in the “stripe-washing.”

Listen! There is a wounded heart somewhere in God’s world that you tore to shreds. You call yourself a Christian and yet you have never stretched forth a finger to heal that broken heart. You say “I believe,” but your belief is an illusion until you have done the “stripe-washing.” Some of you may have money in your pockets which does not belong to you. You call yourselves “Church members” and say “I do believe,” but that money must go back to its rightful owner before you are a Christian. Stripe-washing! Surrender! Casting out your special devil! Belief! Otherwise, what do you believe? What does your belief amount to? It is not worth the noise you make about it unless it helps you to “walk humbly before God” and to “love your neighbour as yourself.” “He took them the same hour of the night and

washed their stripes." That is religion. If you believe you will try to undo the past, and to straighten out the crooked places in your life.

There is a dear old mother in God's world that some of you are starving to death. She is asking for bread, hungering for just a tithe of that love and worship she bestowed upon you when you were helpless and small—and you are giving her a stone—the hard stone of neglect and indifference wherewith to feed her empty heart. Some day, perhaps, you are going to make up for that by putting flowers on the coffin when she is too dead to smell their perfume. Let your mother feed on your love while she is still living. Wash the stripes at the same hour of the night! Many of us have been playing at religion too long. It is time we got down to business, and began to live out our belief in Christ.

"And the next morning he rejoiced in God with all his house." Of course he did! He had done the right thing, chosen the right way. You, also, will have joy "in all your house" when you obey God: when you put God into His rightful place in your heart; when you do your best to straighten out the crooked places in your life. Then you will get joy which will flow as a river. God does not ask you, or expect you to feel like preachers, or evangelists, or anybody else, but He does insist that every man and woman must give up sin and trust Him. If you will do that, He will take care that you have your blessed realisation of the Joy of the Lord.

Supposing the jailer and Lydia were called upon to tell us of their experience of conversion.

The jailer might say, "I tell you, mine was a proper conversion. There was an earthquake. You ought to have been there. You ought to have seen the lightning flash and heard the thunder roll. I tell you, mine was a proper conversion." And then, quietly and gently, Lydia might say, "Thank God for an earthquake that will save such a man. But there was no earthquake when I was converted. In fact, I hardly knew when it had happened. It took place by the river-side one morning. I went to the little prayer-meeting held there, not with any special expectation, and found brother Paul, who preached and prayed, and there, like the breaking of a beautiful dawn upon a sleeping world, the light came into my soul, and Jesus became my 'All-in-all.'" That is just what happens. Your joy will be like a flowing river. I do not say you will feel like the Philippian jailer felt, or, indeed, anybody else; but you will have your own experience—"there are diversities of operations, but the same God which worketh all in all." What I am anxious about is that you should do right. Then God will take care that you have an experience all your own; one that will be infinitely precious and beautiful to your own soul. Neither does it matter in what way your conversion comes. Some people look for a spiritual earthquake before they can be saved, but that may never come. Earthquakes only come when God sends them, and He does not send them everywhere. Others look for something tremendous to happen to prove they are converted. If they will but do the thing which is right, take God at His word, trust His Grace, and walk in harmony with His

Will they will understand that the "tremendous thing" has already taken place. Many people stumble here. They say, "If I could only feel like somebody else I know." That cannot be. It is not necessary to salvation. It is astonishing how many people think that everybody ought to be converted just as they were. Christ does not promise uniformity of experience; that everybody should have the same experience. When you submit to the unalterable conditions, and surrender your whole heart to the keeping of Jesus Christ you will have your own experience.

Now, will you do this? You know what you have to give up. You know God's gospel—and you know your own sin. Will you do it? When you empty your heart of sin, it will be possible for Jesus to come in.

"In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling."

Why bring no price? Because occupied hands cannot be clinging hands. If you want Christ, empty your hands—your heart—of everything that is evil. He is here. He is waiting. He wants to come to you. Will you submit? He is the World's greatest Lover. Will you take Him as yours? Say to Him in heart-sobs of greeting, "My Lord, and My God." Lay hold of Him; lay hold of Eternal Life! Do it now!

XIII

BEARING AND SHARING



XIII

BEARING AND SHARING

TEXT: "For in that He, Himself, hath suffered."
Hebrews. Chapter 11, Verse 18.

I: BEARING

It is Jesus of whom the writer of Hebrews is speaking. Jesus, of The Throne, Son of God, Very God of Very God, He, who was in the beginning, who threw out planets as easily as scattered raindrops, Jesus of Nazareth, Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary. He it is that the writer of Hebrews tells us suffered, and who being tempted is able to succour them that are tempted.

There are meanings to this verse that should be impressed upon every heart. And lay, first of all, the emphasis on the pronoun—Christ suffered for *me*. Will you ponder over these words as though you had never read or heard them before in all your life? Will you not close your eyes to the persons or things about you and give yourself up to this thought, closing your ears to all the sounds which assail them? "Christ suffered for me." For *me*. We have heard those words again and again, read and reread them until they mean very little to the majority of us. Their import, their stupendous meaning, the height and the depth and length and the breadth of these words have never yet commenced to reach some of us.

And if we have heard them we have never realised

their full significance, or completely taken in their meaning. It would need more than one lifetime to do that. We talk about Christ dying for the world but what does that mean to us? How much of that message has ever reached my conscience or stirred me to action? How much of that message has ever reached my intelligence and revolutionised my thought and the values I have set on things? Has it awakened me—pulled me up short—startled and challenged my attention? Has it ever humiliated me or laid me in the dust—seeing myself as God sees me? Or has it given me a deep, disquieting conviction of my own sin and need? Have I seen myself, as a lost sinner, hopeless, undone, alienated by birth, outside the covenant of promise, without hope and without God in the world? Have these words made me think, and feel my exact state or see myself as I am, or the condition which caused Christ to suffer for me?

The difficulty that God has with the most of us is to make us see sin as it is, in all its awful blackness and to see sin in ourselves, to realise the deceitfulness of our own hearts, to come to a right view about our own relationship with Jesus Christ, to see the great gulf sin has made between Him and us. The difficulty God has with my heart is to make me feel that I am the worst man that ever lived. And the difficulty that God has with me is to make me feel, every moment of my life, that I need His redeeming grace and that without it—I dread to use the word lest I fail to put the meaning into it—without it, I am lost, and lost forever.

What is our Bible for, if it is not to teach us that?

And what is our education for if it is not to give us a tender conscience and the sensitiveness of mind which makes us see and feel that there is none whole? No, not one, apart from the cross of Jesus Christ. It is to make us know that we are all sinners; that we all need Him, and that as the old prophet said a long time ago, "All we like sheep have gone astray." All! He did not say some, or a few, or designate a class. It is not the people in the tenements and the slums merely, but the people in the villas and the palaces, the people riding in the automobiles and the aeroplanes, the people wherever you find them, all like sheep having gone astray. "We have turned." That may humble us, and it should; that may pierce, and so it ought. That may even make us angry, but it is the truth. I may not like it, but it is there, and though I may rebel, that is God Almighty's truth. I may fight and resist and struggle against it, but it is unalterable, and God has written it in black capitals around the whole world. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

And if you by your own choice shut yourself out of the first "all" you shut yourself, by choice, out of the second "all" in that verse. "All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." If we go in at the first "all" we will come out at the second. But if we shut ourselves out of the first "all," we have no part or lot in the second. And if we say we don't come under the first "all," then we are taking an axe and cutting down the sacred cross of Christ. If we say the first "all" has no application to us we are tearing out the redeeming grace of

God from His very word, and looking up into the face of the Infinite and telling Him He does not know His own business. You are possibly saying Calvary is superfluous, and you do not need it, and there is no worse sinning than that kind of sinning. These things need to strike down to the very roots of our being before we shall realise what Calvary means. No man can understand anything of the sufferings of Christ until he sounds the depths of his own sin.

For sin is not a cutaneous disease that you can wash away with a lotion; or a moral measles; and it is not in the blood. It is in the heart. It is not in the brain, nor merely in the hand. It is deeper. And though you dress it up in rich clothing and fine linen, it is there; though you decorate it with flowers and garlands, it is there, and you have only to cut deep enough to find it and the only cure this Book says—is Jesus Christ. “Christ suffered for me.” And did that ever come home to you, with all its simple force—with all its wonderful meaning? That Christ went to Calvary for you as though there was not another human being living, as though there was not another man or woman on the face of this planet. And if there had been no other man living or no other woman living but you, Christ would have gone to Calvary for you. Well might the poet sing:

“But none of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed,
Or how dark the night the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert He heard its cry.
Sick, and helpless and ready to die.”

It was a dark night, the waters were deep, but He faced the night and He faced the waters and plunged into the abyss for you, for me.

Oh, you say, I have heard this a thousand times. I know you have, but has it done anything for you, has it cost you anything? Has it made you think, or changed your deeds and life? Has it, in short, made you a new creature, sweet and beautiful and lovable and Christ-like? Has the vision meant anything to you? And with a grateful heart, do you say, "He loved me; He gave Himself for me"? He suffered for you. He lived for you. He died for you. He faced earth and hell for you. The hands of men and devils were joined to tear asunder the quivering heart of the Son of God for you. But has it meant anything to you? We have room for a dog in some of our homes, and we will take it out for an airing; will actually nurse a dog—some of us—will positively spend time on a dog that we have never given to the Son of God. Oh, Jesus Christ, what Thou must bear as Thou dost behold the depths to which humanity has fallen! Have we any time for Jesus? Have we really any love for Jesus? Have we any service for Jesus? "Oh," you say, "you are trying to make a wound in my heart when you state all this." That is what I would do if I could, that I might bring you to the Healer, Christ. Christ suffered for you, for me. Can you let that thought sink into your heart? And if it gets into your heart, into your conscience, down into the roots of your being, it will illuminate life for you, it will transform it. That is the first law. Christ suffered for me.

He bore all, my sin, my curse, my shame. And that is the fact of redemption, the one great outstanding theme of this book. That is the great heart throb and sob felt here and should be the dominant note in every sermon; that the foundation stone of every church in the land. That is the light that breaks from the cliff tops of eternity every morning, that opens the gates of dawn without a creak on their hinges; that is the music of the angels' song; that is the glory of earth, as well as its shame. That is the song, the music and the power which is going to redeem the world. God help us to behold it.

Sin was so awful, so ugly, so black, so impossible of cure by any human hand, so immense in its guilt that only an infinite God dare face it. You cannot even name it without hearing the hiss of the serpent. When you try to say it, the sibilant hiss is there—s-s-sin. Only God could remove it. The difficulty with us is that we spell sin with a small "s"; we want to take the sting, the shame, the cancer, the hatred, the murder, the death, out of it. But when we have covered sin with costly clothes, and decked it with flowers and enriched it with jewels and enthroned it in a palace it is still God's enemy and man's foe. We may think the poison is gone—but it's all there. It is hell's great triumph to deceive us concerning the nature of sin. And all that sin means He bore for me. And when I open my eyes to see the joy of it as well as the shame of it, then He turns around and says to me, "My child, since you have let Me bear your sin, now let Me bear your sorrow. I bear your sin. Now I will share with you My majesty, My life, My

strength, My comfort, My peace, My joy, My rest."

And this text makes our songs possible. There would never have been a song if there had not been a text like this. We couldn't have sung to the world, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest," if Jesus had not said it. Do not in the sentiment of it, or in the perfection of it, or in the mere literary beauty of it forget the sufferings of Christ. In your roses do not forget the cross. In your art do not forget the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief. As you take the gift, kiss the hand that brings the gift. Do not miss Him. Let Him come into your life and He will eat with you, He will share with you and you will find that He can kiss every tear into a jewel and He can change every sigh into a song. And when you have walked with Him a little while, you learn that the jewels of character are the crystals of suffering; and when you have had fellowship with Him, you will know that tears are the product of pain and you will discover that you get the sweetest perfume from flowers that are crushed and that from distilled tears you can write gospels.

He will share with you your sorrows, your weakness, the thorny path, the rough way, the hard place, the struggle, the conflict, the bitter experience, the heartache, the misunderstanding, the slander and the abuse. He knew all about it. He went there ahead of you and He will say to you as you talk to Him and tell Him of your weakness and sorrow and tears, "My child, my hand was blistered; My head ached; My feet bled; My heart broke; My days were sad; My nights were sleepless; My burdens were heavy because this

was laid on Me, and of the people there was none with Me. When I craved for sympathy I did not get it. My mother misunderstood Me; and from My own family I received nothing but insult." And He will say to you, "Just as long as I bear the marks on My hands and feet and side, and as long as I remember the tears and the thorns, I will not forget you. Thou art Mine. I have redeemed thee. Lean on Me; My strength shall be made perfect in your weakness. Share with Me in My strength. Be not afraid, I have overcome the world." All that He says to you, and much more. He, first of all, bears my sin, and then He shares with me in my sorrow. Every hour, every day, moment after moment. For there is never a conflict but what He is at hand; never a battle that He does not help in the fight. Never a cross that He does not get underneath with me. And it is astonishing how the cross fits when you let Him buckle it on. It never chafes. Oh, take the comfort out of your gospel, my brother; let down your bucket into this glorious old well of gospel truth and draw joy this very day from the waters of salvation. Appropriate. Live up to your privileges. Possess what belongs to you. Claim it. It is yours. The steps are three.

First, He bears my sin; secondly, He comes down into my life and shares my sorrow, and then, finally, some day He is going to say to me, "Come up here with Me and share with Me in My glory." When you got up this morning, did you sit down a few moments and think about the inheritance that is yours in Christ? Do you ever stop to think? You are only a stranger in a foreign country; you are only a pilgrim. This is

not your home; your home is above, where He is. Every man that hath this hope in him is looking for the hour when He shall appear. You shall see Him as He is. Are you looking forward to that day?

Somebody came to me a few weeks ago with some remark about the crown which I should get when I reached heaven. It does not bother me much about the crown; I have small concern with that; I do not care very much whether I have one or not, if I can only crown Him. When they talk to me about the golden streets and the jasper walls and the many mansions and the streets of gold, I say to myself, "What would all that mean to me if I had not Jesus?" You may take your golden streets and your jasper walls and your many mansions and your gates of pearl. You may have them all if you will give me Jesus. Jesus! He who died for me; who has had patience with me all these years; who has not cast me off when I deserved it; who has not forsaken me when I have forgotten Him; who loved me with a love that surpasses the love of all those who are dear to me. If you will give me Jesus and my dear mother, you may put me back into my gipsy tent and that will be all the heaven I want. I must have Jesus and those I love, and that is Heaven. We are going to live with Him forever. Does that thought thrill you to a deeper consecration, to a more whole-hearted service, to a determination to live for Christ as you have never lived?

A little while ago in one of our colliery districts, a young collier, who was converted during the Welsh revival, one morning was carried home from the pit more dead than alive, and he lay in the little cottage

with his mother watching and waiting for the first signs of life. At length, when he did just come back to partial consciousness he found his mother sobbing over him, as a mother would, as though her heart would break. And, at this, called back by the mother's love to full consciousness, he said, "Mother, what are you crying for?" And she put her hands on his poor back and around his bruised head and she said, "Oh, John, your head is so smashed up." "Never mind, mother," he replied, "the crown will fit." The crown will fit! That is the confidence of the child of God. Have you got it? If you have *not* that, what is the use of all the rest you possess? Your soul is not a corn chest, or a safe-deposit vault. Your soul needs God. Are you feeding on Him? Are you resting in Him? Can you close your eyes now and say, "Christ suffered for me; He is mine; I am His"? If you can say this you are sitting in the twilight of the coming glory.

"In pining, sickness or in health,
Christ for me.
In deepest poverty or wealth,
Christ for me.
And in that all important day,
When I the call of death obey
And pass from this dark world away,
Christ for me."

II: SHARING

Now turn with me to the Epistle of Peter and read three portions therefrom. The first is found in the

Second Epistle, the first chapter and the fourth verse, "Partakers of His divine nature." The second portion is found in the First Epistle, the fourth chapter and the thirteenth verse, "Partakers of His sufferings." The third portion is found in the First Epistle, the fifth chapter and the first verse, "Partakers of His glory."

Let us look into these words with an earnest, devout spirit, desiring only to see and understand the mind of God. Only the prayerful and those sympathetic with God can understand.

If you read these verses carefully with their context intelligently, you will come to the conclusion that it means far more to be a Christian than the average professor seems to realise.

In these days the tendency is to cheapen the teaching of this Book. We have lowered its standard and with multitudes of people it means a very little thing to be a Christian. It does not cost anything to be one. Joining the church is not much nowadays. We come into the church easily and we slip out of it easily. We have lowered the standard. We have broadened the narrow way. Our religion is a sickly, sentimental sanctimoniousness, instead of being vital, life-giving, a terror to evil-doers, its presence a rebuke, its authority commanding, resisting, and holding in reverence and holy awe. We have lost much by our inconsistency.

When I came to Christ a quarter of a century or more ago, it was a serious matter, and our old grandmothers' religion was a serious business, and we have not improved on our grandmothers' religion yet. To

be a Christian then was to enter on a conflict; it was a warfare, a struggle, a pilgrimage; it was resisting sin, even to blood. There was a text in the Bible that talked about cutting off the right arm sin; there was another one that talked about plucking out the right eye sin; there was another that talked about being maimed, limbless, for Christ's sake. There was a text that said, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty." There was another text that said, "Obedience is better than sacrifice and to harken than the fat of rams"; and another that said, "If any man will be My disciple let him take up his cross and deny himself and follow Me"; and another, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Men believed these words once. Men preached them. Now it is a picnic, a social, an entertainment. Now it is, "Come up here and I will shake hands with you and make you a member of the church." It is just as easy as that with many. These hands of mine could write your name down on a piece of paper and call it a church record. These hands of mine could confirm you; for there is as much in these human hands as other human hands. But though I could write your name down on a piece of paper and make you a member of a religious club or an educational institution, it takes the Holy Ghost to make you a child of God. But in this day we have compromised; we have lowered the standard to win and we have

failed to win in the doing of it, and I would rather lose my soul in an honest attempt to keep the standard up, though I never reached it, than I would lose my soul lowering the standard to suit my own miserable, contemptible experience. Our business is to keep God's standard up.

What does it mean to be a Christian? "To partake of the divine nature!" And you are not a Christian until you have done this. And you have no claim to the title until you have reached that experience, I do not care who gave the name to you; you have no right to it. It does not belong to you until you have in-breathed, taken in, absorbed, conformed to, become a part of, the divine nature. That is what religion means according to the New Testament, to be a partaker of the divine nature, to so take in Jesus that all who look into your face shall be made to think of Him; that all who come into your presence shall feel they are in the presence of Jesus; that those who shake hands with you shall feel a little bit of the lifting power of Calvary; that those who have to do business with you will feel they are doing business with somebody who reminds them of Jesus. Those who live with you shall feel they are living with Christ's man, Christ's woman. They come into contact with a new creature and they recognise Christ when they see Him. They know when He is there and they see Him in you because you have become part of Him, and Christ in you is the hope of glory. Is that the kind of experience you have? I wonder what this man went through before he wrote these words, what kind of a spiritual upheaval in his moral nature had taken place before

he was able to write a line like that. What kind of a new creating power had passed through his being before he was able to say, "A partaker of the Divine Nature." Oh, the joy of it, when a soul awakes to this and out of the depths of its own new life is able to say:

"Life immortal, Heaven descending,
Lo, my heart, the spirit's shrine,
God and man in oneness blending,
Oh, what fellowship divine!"

Do we know anything about that, men and women? Nearly two thousand years ago this was Peter's religion. Is ours as good? With all the light and the triumph and the vision of the ages, yours and mine ought to be a little better than his. But is it as good? Have we taken in Christ or have we put on the mind of Christ? Have you lived in Him at all—is it Christ who lives in you? What a wonderful experience it must have been to the Apostle Paul when he was able to say, "Christ died for me." He didn't stay there; he got one step further, and you hear him saying, "I died with Christ; I am crucified with Christ," and he didn't stay contented there even; he got beyond that, and he said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And, on another occasion, he said, "For me to live is Christ," that is, "For me to live"—for Paul to live—"is for Christ to live over again in me." If Paul came here to preach do you think you wouldn't hear Jesus in him? If Paul were to engage in prayer in your presence, do you think you would not hear Jesus in the prayer and feel Jesus? Or, if Paul came to live in your

house for a little while, do you not think you would know Jesus was there? And your neighbours and your friends and your family and your husband and your children, your wife, people who sit at the same table with you, people who work at the same desk with you, the people who do business with you, the people who come up against you in daily life, ought to be just as conscious that Christ is in you as they were conscious that the disciples had been with Jesus and learned of Him; and if it is not so there is something the matter. What kind of Christ are you representing to the world? What kind of Christ are you interpreting to the people of the present age? Jesus, the Man of the cross? Just the kind of Christ that you have absorbed into your own soul you are revealing day by day. If it is a superficial Christ, if it is a sentimental Christ, if it is a socialistic Christ, if it is a poetical Christ, if it is an over-tolerant and indifferent Christ—if that is all, that is all you are revealing; but if it is the Christ of Calvary who hates sin enough to die to put it away, if it is the Christ who comes to save His people from their sin and make them whole and has done that for you, that is the kind of Christ you are revealing to the world. Just as much of the Divine Nature as you have taken in you are revealing; no more. How can you give what you do not possess, or work out what you have never allowed God to work in?

It was my joy once to conduct a mission in Paris. I wish there were opportunity here to record some of the wonders of the triumphs of grace amongst those beautiful and artistic Parisians. There a lady came to me one night, tears streaming down her face, a cul-

tured French woman, wringing her hands in distress, with heart hunger in her face, and crying: "Oh, man of God, I want your Jesus, your Jesus. I can love your Jesus, and I cannot love a clerical Jesus." "Your Jesus; I want your Jesus;" and do you know, that ever since then there occasionally comes to my heart, and my mind demands the question of my heart, "What kind of a Jesus are you revealing to the people you are preaching to? What kind?" And the kind of Christ you love and the kind of Christ you serve and the kind of Christ you obey is the Christ that is felt in you and through you.

What kind of Jesus are you living? Are you a partaker of the Divine Nature? Oh, I do not care and the world does not care about your profession; it does not count. I do not care about your activity in Christian work; it doesn't amount to anything if you are not living the true Jesus—it is mere fuss. I do not want to know what position you occupy in the church or how long you have been a member of it or how much you know. Have you taken on Jesus? That is the question. But we are to be more than partakers of the Divine Nature; we are also partakers of His sufferings—sufferings! No one wants to suffer nowadays, least of all, perhaps, in the church. Suffering is for all mankind—though for ourselves just the very thing we want to get rid of; we do not want to suffer. Who wants a broken heart? We pride ourselves now, that every one desires to get rid of suffering; the whole fabrication of society tries to ward off sorrow and to prevent our recognising it when it exists. It is the

scheming and the desire of all, morning, noon and night, to keep away from the sad and the tearful and the burdened; and yet nobody knows Christ who is not willing to suffer with Him.

That is part of Christianity. And it is a very vital part, too. The Christian life is not all joy. You must be prepared to go with Him in the shadow and in the darkness and in the storm and be willing to walk with Him alone, to walk with Him when you are counted a fool for Christ's sake; you must be willing to walk with Him when it is unpopular to walk with Him; you must be prepared to walk with Him when everybody runs away and forsakes Him. You must be prepared to walk with Him, though you do it with bleeding feet and a breaking heart; you must put your shoulders under the burden and help Him carry it. For Christ is still a lonely Christ—aye, and to the end of this world, ever will be—and the best of us really are not willing to follow Him all the way; we are willing to follow just as long as it pays, just as long as it suits us, just as long as it means pillows and sunshine. We do not care to drink the bitter cup; we do not want the crown of thorns; we do not want Calvary. That is the thing we want to avoid. Nobody likes Good Friday, though everybody wants the flowers and the sunshine of Easter. But we do want to eliminate Good Friday from the calendar. And yet, men and women, no Good Friday means no Easter. Good Friday makes Easter possible, and if there is no Good Friday in your experience and mine there will be no Easter dawn. To be a Christian means to suffer:

“Not for ease or worldly glory,
Nor for fame, my prayer shall be;
Gladly will I toil and suffer,
Only let me walk with Thee.”

With Thee! There is a joy in sorrow, a secret balm for pain, a handful of sweet manna, of sunshine after rain. When you are there, there is a branch of healing near every bitter spring, a whispered promise stealing over every broken string; and there is a joy—we say it with reverence—a joy that Jesus would never have known if He had not gone to Calvary. And so it comes about we have these words, “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame.” And he who lives to evade suffering will never know Christ in his fulness. But, if on the other hand, one partakes of suffering with Jesus, will there be joy in life; can such be a happy Christian? Yes. Happy because you go down into the depths with Christ in order to lift up and to save. Happy, ten thousand times yes, because you see the conquest and victory, because you have fellowship with Him. That is why you are happy. Do you know anything about it? Did you ever sit up for a night watching, watching and trying to win a lost soul for Christ? Do you know what it is to lie awake unable to sleep because some soul is crushing you to the earth and you are bravely fighting for its deliverance from the guilt and the power of sin? Do you know what it is to go out in the darkness with the Good Shepherd and seek until you find? Do you know anything about that? Oh, men and women, it costs something

to be a Christian. It costs, and it means tears and blood.

A lady who was interested in some sort of Christian work in London, wrote me once and said, "I have a meeting I want you to come and speak to. It is only a small meeting, and it will take nothing out of you." I answered, "I cannot come; and it would be no use if I did come. If it takes nothing out of me it will do nobody any good." It is the service that costs and a cheap religion isn't worth preaching. It costs. It costs. He was weary and sat thus on the well; weary because out of Him there flowed His own life in the lifting up of other people. Do you know what it means, I ask, to live one hour for Christ and with Him in the saving of a soul? Oh, I often fancy I hear my Master say to some flippant professed Christian, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" Not one hour. It costs, I say, to be a Christian.

Years ago, when I was a young preacher in the service that was given up to the glorious privilege of testifying to the grace of God in Jesus Christ, several people gave their testimony. One said he had been saved from drunkenness, and another from gambling, and another from the life of pleasure and so on. Presently, a sweet and beautiful girl arose, born in an attractive home, with good blood in her veins, refined and cultured. She looked at the people who had given their testimony and then she said, "God has done a great and wondrous thing for many of you people who have spoken. But," she added, "He did more for me than he did for all of you; He saved me from an easy armchair"—and it often takes a very real salvation to

save professed Christians from laziness—"He saved me from an easy armchair!" But more than this—she was not only saved from her armchair, but she was most decidedly called into the service of Christ; she became an officer and captain in the Salvation Army, against the wish of her friends. But it was the call of her Lord, and she followed. Her mother and her friends opposed her, and even did all they could to thwart her, but it was the call of her Lord and she went forth. She did not listen to flesh and blood; she gave no heed to those who were nearest to her, who would gladly have blocked her way to service for Christ, and to humanity. She went forth to spend and to be spent, and for several years she gave her beautiful life in all weathers to the outcast, to the lost and to the Christless. Then the breakdown came and they carried her home to be nursed by her mother with the hope that in the old home and with the old surroundings she would rally and recover. The doctor was called in and then the specialist, and a consultation was held, and a careful examination made. Then the specialist said to her, "If you will give up your work, and absolutely stop preaching and singing, and stop visiting the sick, we think, if you will take our advice, we can pull you around. And in a year it may be possible that you will be something like your old self again; but," said the doctor, sternly, "if you will go on with this Salvation Army business you will die." She looked up at the doctor and a little bit of the light that surrounds the throne was seen in her face when she said, "Doctor, let me work well for one more year and I will be content to die."

That is the spirit that saves the world. Have you got it? That is religion. You know we have been too long playing at religion: it is time we began to live it. The men outside in the streets who do not come into our churches, they take no stock in shams. But the reality commands respect. Partakers of the Divine Nature means to be partakers of His sufferings, and that makes it possible for us to be partakers of His glory.

A friend and I were recently talking about the glory of seeing Jesus face to face. The thought overwhelms me when I think of the moment when I wash the dust out of my eyes by the river that comes near the seat of God; when all the meanness has been washed away, when all the limitations are gone, when all the narrowness from my poor little soul has been just stripped off and I see Him face to face. That moment! And then the joy of seeing my mother and the hosts from around the planet that I have had some share in helping to win for Christ. Will anybody meet me? That is the glory. There will be no glory to the man or to the woman who has just got in by the skin of his teeth, saved so as by fire. He will never say, "Well done," if you haven't done well. God is no respecter of persons, and He will not lie to please anybody. The glory is to come to those who have lived, honestly striving, honestly struggling, honestly sacrificing in order to glorify him on the earth.

You know it says in a little phrase in this Book, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." That is a special joy; and only those will enter into the joy of the Lord who have entered into the sufferings of their

Lord as well. This is the fruit of a growth, the consummation of a past, the glory of the Lord! We are to be partakers of that. He will take some of us by the hand some day and say, "These are they whom you helped Me win," and before triumphant worlds that never need a Saviour because of their obedience to the Divine Nature, He will say, "These are"—yes, that man and that man and that woman—"these are they that helped Me to win; they went forth suffering, toiling, living, dying, willing to help Me win the world and to save it from sin." That is the business for me. Are you in this business, men and women? This is religion as I conceive it in the New Testament. Do you know anything about it? Partakers of His Divine Nature, partakers of His sufferings and then partakers of His glory. I think sometimes I would like to live until the last soul comes back to God. I would like to join in the shout which will ring over the ramparts of the city of our God.

One night in one of our meetings in a great city in a huge and crowded building that seated eighteen thousand people, there was a battalion of soldiers, a splendid set of young fellows, fifty in all. We reserved a space for them and they sat there, on my right. I turned to them once and asked them if they would sing a chorus for that whole audience, "Where He leads me I will follow," and they sang it, and sang it with all their might. When the appeal came for those who would give themselves for Christ, one young soldier got up and then another, then another, and then another, until forty-nine of them had gone into the inquiry room and the fiftieth sat still with his head

bowed in his hand. One of his comrades left the inquiry room and went back to his seat and put his arms around his comrade's neck, and pleaded with him to come. He hesitated, and I went down and pleaded with him, and presently the man rose and followed his comrades into the inquiry room, the last man of fifty. That huge audience of eighteen thousand people could not resist it; they broke out into applause when the last man went in. And I believe that if I could look from the battlements of the sky when the last man comes home, I would turn in that same spirit and shout, "Cheer!!!"

I think if I work well and live well—if I am not privileged to see it from earth—they will let me look on from the battlements of the sky, and I will add another fagot to the bonfire of eternal victory. That is something of a taste of the joy of my Lord. Will you be in this service? Has earth anything to compare with it? Are there pleasures or joys to be named in the same breath with it? Do not waste your precious time in vainly hunting empty bubbles in the air. Do not try to feed your precious soul on ashes, on the whirlwind. Oh, young man, Christ is worthy of the best. There is no life which can compare with the life spent in the service of the King of kings. There is no master like Him, no service equal to His. Young woman, give him the sweetest hours, the purest heart throb, the noblest you possess. It is the path to the truest womanliness, to a beauty of character which never fades, to happiness which has no bounds. Do not waste yourselves on that which will bring ruin, heartbreak and a Christless eternity, and cannot satisfy

even while it ruins. Be ready. Ye know not what an hour may bring forth. Is your heart anything that it ought not to be? Bring it to Jesus. He will take away that sullen heart. He will cleanse it. He will give you a new heart. He will make you a new creature, for

He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the vilest clean,
His blood avails for me.

THE END

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